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ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

VOLUME I.

ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

Notion

Then take the Spring while it is Spring,
Live warm in Summer while it glows,
Nor wait till Winter comes as king
With crown of thorns that bear no rose.

IN THREE VOLUMES.



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ANNALS OF AN EVENTFUL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

HOW I WAS BORN, AND WHAT HAPPENED AFTERWARDS.

I WAS born in the year 181—. I am not going to tell you the exact year; and am not likely to bore any of my readers with recollections of the Peace of Amiens or the Campaigns of the Duke of Wellington. Yes, I was born, but before I was born my existence was blighted. Not that I came into the world a rickety thing, for I was a most healthy child; morally blighted, I mean. Every one had made up their minds that I was to be one thing, and I came out another. In a word, it had been settled that I was to be a girl, and I was born a boy.

‘Amphora cœpit
Institui; currente rotâ cur urceus exit?’

We were a boy family, and we had been a
VOL. I. B

boy family time out of mind. Every now and then, after a run of fifteen boys or so, Nature, or whatever it is that settles these things, threw us a girl by way of a sop; but I am bound to say, they had far better have been boys; they were merely boys in girls' clothing, but inwardly they were thorough males. One such sop had been my father's sister. At first the terror, and afterwards the delight, of my existence, I fancy I see her now, and hear her say, 'Oh, child, that you had been a girl!' Well! this strong-minded woman had settled it with my parents that I was to be a girl, that I was to be called after her, to be adopted by her, and though last, not least, to have her money and her land. I have heard it whispered that my father had doubts on the matter, and that he was seen to wring his hands when baby's sex was talked of as a foregone conclusion. But my father was a wise man, and kept his doubts to himself, thinking, perhaps, that time would show; and accordingly, when time did show, and our old nurse ran downstairs to tell him that baby was born; and born a boy, my father was almost the only one in the house who was not surprised.

My mother fortunately, under the circumstances, could say very little; but as for my Aunt, who was about as old as my father, and

rather bullied him, I have heard nurse say, 'She was neither to haud nor to bind, but went about the house just like a rampaging cow.' What 'a rampaging cow' may be I can scarce say, even out-of-doors; but indoors, and 'about the house,' it must be a most unpleasant phenomenon. If tossing was any part of the performance, my aunt could have done it beautifully. No one ever tossed up her head higher, and no one ever kept her head so long at tossing pitch. To see her do it was as good a sight as a mountebank balancing a donkey on a ladder—a spectacle now, alas! very rare in London streets. But even a rampaging cow, if left to herself, must wear herself out; and so it was on the day of my birth. The other children were sent over to a neighbour; my father drove over his estate, there was no governess to rampage over or with, and the doctor, when he took his leave of my Aunt, insisted that the house must be kept as still as death; not so much as a mouse should be heard to stir, she could not be too cautious, and so on, with a bundle of commonplaces which meant, 'Dear Mrs. Mandeville, if I had power to turn you out of this house I would; but as I haven't, I expect you to be quiet so long as you stay here.'

No wonder, then, that after Dr. Mindererus had departed Mrs. Mandeville took some *sal vola-*

tile, sat down and had a good cry, and went to sleep.

Now I daresay you will say, Then let her sleep for ever, for what we care; why do you raise her up thirty years dead, to make the beginning of your story hideous? Yes! that is just the reason why I raise her up. She did all she could to make my life hideous, and she very nearly succeeded. First of all, she was always snubbing me, and I have heard nurse say, 'If Mrs. Man-Devil had had her way, Master Teddy would have had a humpback.' Once or twice she was caught trying to drop 'the little innocent'—yes! me, the little innocent—on the floor, and several times she cut my nails to the quick; once, in cutting my hair, she snipped off a bit of my ear; in fact, she was always brandishing steel about, and scaring me out of my wits. Then she persuaded my parents that pastry and fruit were bad—not for all the children, but for me in particular. Oh! the agonies I have endured at seeing the whole family circle devouring flaming mince-pies like so many devout fire-worshippers, while I was condemned to eat tapioca or sago pudding. Then she said she was sure that plays and pantomimes were too exciting for me, that I should have water on the brain if I went; and the result was that I was packed off

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to bed while all the rest went in a merry party to the theatre. You will ask, of course, why this tyranny was borne; but I can give you a very good answer. Though I had not proved a girl—for which, on the bended knib of my pen, I most devoutly thank Heaven—I was considered to be in some sort Mrs. Mandeville's property; and as it was supposed that she would add to that property all she had, or, in other words, make me her heir, my father and mother agreed that Auntie must be humoured, and that she should have her way with the boy.

Now, I may as well confess that Aunt Mandeville's property,—that is I, Edward Halfacre,—was very undutiful to her. Whether it was that my digestion rose against her interference with its sacred right to ruin itself with mince-pies—whether it loathed tapioca and sago as much as that dear old man of Tobago—who can tell? Certain it is that if, according to nurse, Aunt Mandeville plotted against my baby life, I, in my turn, put her in some peril of hers. As a little boy I was of a very lively, sprightly turn, much given to what a horse-dealer told me one of his horses was also given to—'*badinage*.' 'Well!' I said, 'that's a queer quality in a horse; is it a virtue or a vice?' 'I can't 'xactly say, sir, but that 'loss of mine as is given to *badinage* 'ud

pitch Fordham over his 'ead in five minutes.' By which I mean that I was a very wicked little boy to Auntie. Sometimes I would roll myself up like a ball, and lie in her way, that I might trip her up; every day, as soon as I could reach up to her collar, I put pigtails on her. Once—I confess it with bitter shame—I heated the handle of the poker, and put it close to her, that she might burn her fingers; and, though last, not least, I remember, when she was standing up to carve a leg of mutton at luncheon, slipping gently off my chair, and suddenly drawing away hers just as she was in the act of sitting down. I fancy I see my father and mother both lifting up their hands aloft, and hear their shrieks, as down went Aunt Mandeville, knife and fork in air, flat on her back; the result being that I was sent off dinnerless to bed, while Auntie was picked up, feeling herself all over to see if she had any bones broken.

But where all this time, you will ask, was Mr. Mandeville? That is soon answered. Dead and gone. Stretched comfortably out among the rude forefathers of the hamlet; and if conscious, dreading lest the sound of the last trumpet should recall him to the side of Mrs. Mandeville. 'Poor old fellow! He had a good heart, and a good constitution,' nurse used to say; 'but

law! child, what was that if one had to live alone with Auntie? No! No! he couldn't abide it. He made a good fight, though! Lived with her better than three years, and then, all at once, he died. Dr. Mindererus do say it were apoplexy, or sunstroke, or compression on the brain; but I tell you it was Auntie on the brain. She was fond of him, but for all that she killed him. Women often do kill them as they love, and then they cry for them, and build their tombs. Did you ever see Squire Mandeville's tomb at Mandeville Hall? . . . Well, well! child, you'll see it some day; for if you're a good boy, they do say Auntie means to leave it all to you, and then you'll remember your old nurse,—won't you? there's a dear.'

So much for old Mandeville, whose time could not have been a jolly one. He left his wife Mandeville Hall; and so, what with his property and hers, Auntie was a person of consequence in the neighbourhood. Before I go any further, let me say that all these terrible accounts of Aunt Mandeville were mere nursery gossip. Nursie hated Aunt Mandeville, and painted her in hideous colours. It is perfectly true that she was bitterly disappointed that I was not a girl; that she took care of my digestion, and that I was very ungrateful to her for her pains.

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She was a woman of strong will, and as such much the better horse when she was Squire Mandeville's yoke-fellow. My father and mother, too, for the same reason, were terribly afraid of her. But in after-years, when I really became her property, I found her as good as gold—when she had her own way.

CHAPTER II.

HOW MY FATHER BECAME A WEST INDIA PROPRIETOR.

WHERE did we live? Why, reader, you are like a child at a watering-place, so curious and inquisitive. Next you will ask what we were? what my father did? had we a carriage? how many horses? how many servants? I had better answer at once. We had all these; and my father was nothing. He was well off, but that was no concern of mine, for did I not belong to Aunt Mandeville? As for our house, it was in the Midland Counties. I will even go so far as to tell you it was in Warwickshire, but further as to my father's abode in England I do not mean to go. Besides his English estate, he had land beyond the sea. An old uncle had been a planter in the West Indies in the good old time, and when he died he made my father his heir. Now to what shall we liken a West Indian estate in this bad new time? A millstone round your neck is not a pleasant thing even on land, nor is

it nice to walk up a mountain when the snow reaches mid-thigh. Water-lilies are lovely to look at from the bank, or out of a boat, but they are death to the strongest swimmer; and so it is with a West Indian estate. Sweet is sugar to those who eat it. Sweet to old women in their tea, and to little boys in tarts; but gall and wormwood to those who have to make it dear, and sell it cheap. Well! I belong to Aunt Mandeville, and so I am not going to moralise on sugar-candy, clayed muscovadoes, jaggery, date-sugar, beet-root, maple, diabetes, or any other of the sugar-stuffs or processes. All I say is, woe to the man now-a-days who has a West Indian estate! But it was not so bad then, fifteen years before the emancipation; and my father was thought to be a lucky man when it was noised through the Forest of Arden that old Colonel Ratoon had died in the West Indies, and made Squire Halfacre his heir. Then in due course Messrs. Steele, Penn, and Quill, old Ratoon's solicitors, wrote from Lincoln's-Inn-Fields to inform my father that they were ready to prove the will; and Messrs. Short, Ready, and Stump, his bankers, advised him of the balance standing at their bank in the late Colonel Ratoon's name; and though last, not least, Messrs. Claw, Tooth, and Nail, of Vulture Yard, Great

St. Helen's, the late Colonel Ratoon's merchants, who sold his sugar and rum and molasses for him at ten per cent commission, and sent him out vacuum pans and mill-wheels, and condensers and boilers, and cane-crushers, also at ten per cent commission, which ten per cent became twenty, if in their jargon 'they came under advances,'—this most respectable firm, I say, 'notified' my father that they were ready to transact the business relating to the Two Rivers Estates, in the Island of St. Saccharissa, on the same terms as those which had been agreed on between the late lamented Colonel Ratoon and their firm.

Strange to say, all these letters reached my father on the same day. He was a good, easy man, who lived happily on his estates, and thought all months endurable except June and July, when there was nothing to shoot. Norway was not then discovered, or he would have rushed off to fish there; but as it was, he managed to exist through May with a little rook and rabbit shooting; and on the 12th of August he went as regularly to Scotland to destroy grouse, as the puffins depart on the same day from their island off Anglesea.

As for business, he had an agent, who used to come over once a-month or so, and have a dreary

morning of accounts with him at Halfacre Hall ; not that his estates were at all encumbered, but my father hated accounts, and, to tell the truth, he would much sooner have gone to the dentist once a-month than see his agent for half-an-hour. You may fancy then how he felt when he had three business letters, each signed by a trine of partners.

‘Steele, Penn, and Quill,’ ‘Short, Ready, and Stump,’ ‘Claw, Tooth, and Nail,’ he murmured, ‘nine men of business ; why, I shall have to go up to town.’

And to town he went, and in town he stayed, to my mother’s amazement, a month before he returned. This was long before railways, and people used not to rush backwards and forwards by express. It was also before the penny post ; in the good old times of which I spoke, when no general post-letter cost less than eightpence, and when people, even men, were wicked enough to cross their letters. In those days, too, when you had written a letter you had to fold it—no such easy thing, let me tell you, to do neatly ; and if I wished to show, in one sentence, how much better off we of this generation are than our forefathers, I would simply say—‘Then there were no envelopes.’ My father hated letter-writing, but he was good, and wrote often to my mother ; but his

letters were so full of 'Short, Ready, and Stump,' 'Claw, Tooth, and Nail,' and 'Steele, Penn, and Quill,' and entered so much into probates, and balances, and consignments, and brokers, that my mother could make neither head nor tail of them; and even my Aunt Mandeville, whose knowledge of business was supposed in the family to be profound, confessed herself puzzled.

'Brother Halfacre has got into a new world,' she said. 'I hope we shall have him back safe, and that he will not be torn to pieces by Messrs. Claw, Tooth, and Nail.'

'I do wish though,' added my mother, 'that he would tell us whether he has seen the king; and what's the truth of this story about poor Lord Castlereagh, and whether ladies' waists are longer, and their bonnets smaller, this season than last.'

At last he came back, but it was only to talk incessantly of the mystic nine who made up the three firms. It was plain though that the three that had the firmest hold on him were, as might be expected, Messrs. Claw, Tooth, and Nail. As for bankers, they are very obliging, but it is rather in deeds than in words. I once spent a day in Switzerland with three bankers, all of one house, and it was by far the dullest day I ever passed in my life. No one can spend a day with

a banker ; it is a contradiction in terms. As for conversation, they have none—‘How will you take it?’ is their longest sentence. No! you may shoot, fish, and hunt with a banker, and you may dine with him, and do all well ; but with bankers it is as with your destiny in a future state, you must bring your happiness with you, and trust to no one else. A lively banker is a dangerous banker ; he ought to be gazetted out of the firm as soon as possible.

Nor are solicitors, as a rule, lively. Besides, the more respectable a firm is, the more likely are you to sneeze when visiting them, and I hate sneezing. Inwardly, like old port, they may be cheering and cheerful, but outwardly they are sawdust and cobwebs. But a merchant may be very lively and pleasant. In them there is more of that speculative nature so attractive to generous minds. There is something spirited and genial even in their ventures ; and as the finest bird often lives in the dingiest nest, many a merchant, when he wings his way west from the sunless prison of Vulture Court, may shine in society at night as brilliant as a firefly of the south.

So it was with my father’s merchants. Claw, the senior partner, lived in a street which opened on Park Lane. He had a few fine pictures ; statues by Thorwaldsen and Canova ; a choice

library, and gave good dinners at which all the wits of the town were welcome.

Tooth was not so grand. He lived in Bryanston Square, a spot then, as now, of infinite respectability. The Bryanstonians in their inner hearts, I believe, think it fashionable, and mean next season to have chairs and a Row of their own, even more rotten and more frequented than that on the south side of Hyde Park; but let that pass. In the year 182— Tooth lived there; he was the oldest of the partners, and was one of those mysterious persons who are said to have come to London with half-a-crown in their pockets, and to have realised a splendid fortune all by their own exertions. The truth, I believe, was that Tooth had been warehouseman to old Claw, the father of Claw the second. He was industrious, and more, he was handsome. Old Claw and his son and daughter lived in Vulture Yard, that was the cradle of their race, their *Stammhaus*, like the Rothschilds' in the Frankfort Judengasse. Miss Claw never saw any one but the warehouseman, fell in love with him, and had the sense to tell her father. Old Claw, if this were a mere common novel instead of a most truthful story, would have flown into a fury, set his face against the match, wedded his daughter to an attorney who had red hair, black

teeth, limped like Vulcan and squinted like John Wilks; the warehouseman would have become a highwayman, waylaid the attorney, who just then had his pockets full of thousand-pound notes, robbed him, blown his brains out, married his widow, who would never have discovered that he was her long-lost lover till she was on her death-bed of consumption, brought on by pining for her first love. In which supreme hour the ex-highwayman would have confessed that he had gone over to the Church of Rome when he took to the road, and that his spiritual director had laid this penance on him to purge him of his sin in murdering the attorney. He was to marry the widow, and never to tell her his history. This confession would have been too much for the consumptive widow, she would have died in the arms of her husband and lover now happily united. The bereaved husband, then left to his own reflections, would have founded a monastery, subsisted on herring-bones and potato-parings, of which he partook on all fours out of a trough, and died at last in the odour of sanctity, a thoroughly holy man.

But this is not a sensational novel, but plain matter-of-fact, and as plain truth is often much more astonishing than fiction, old Claw simply gave his consent, let his daughter marry the

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warehouseman, and made him his partner. And old Claw was quite right. One of the clerks who had served the firm for fifty years, and was allowed to be facetious, said, 'Our Mr. Tooth is the eye-tooth of the firm,' and so it was. Old Claw's business increased twenty-fold after the partnership; and when he died and left it to his son and Tooth, and the name of the firm, which had been first Claw, then Claw and Son, then Claw, Claw, and Tooth, became Claw and Tooth, the two surviving partners were wealthy enough to take another partner into the firm, on condition that he brought a hundred thousand pounds into the concern. This partner they found in Mr. Nail, whose father was, like Alexander in the Acts, a coppersmith, and had dealt largely with Claw and Tooth in manufacturing sugar-boilers and such gear for the West Indian estates on which they had mortgages.

Mr. Nail was the youngest of the firm, which now became Claw, Tooth, and Nail. He was a bachelor, and lived in lodgings in St. James's Street. He often went to the theatre; not like Tooth, who was devoted to the Kembles, and took a prominent part in the O.P. riots, if any one remembers what they were. If Mr. Tooth had a pain in the face he called it an *ache*, not an *ake*, because that was how Mr. John Kemble

pronounced the passage in the 'Tempest'—'For this thou shalt have aches.' If he ever took a holiday it was to hurry away to the third row of the pit at Drury Lane, where he took his seat comfortably before the overture began. But Nail was not so 'legitimate.' He was not like Tooth, he cared little for the Kembles. Farce and comedy were his delight. He adored Liston, and still more Vestris. Another of the clerks, one of those people who hear and see everything either with their own eyes and ears, or those of their friends, had heard Mr. Tooth's greengrocer say that he knew an oilman, who knew a sceneshifter, who said that once 'Our Mr. Nail' had been seen to slip a nosegay—now-a-days we call it bouquet—into the hand of Madame Vestris as she retired from the stage.

But this is not a history of Claw, Tooth, and Nail, they are only of interest as being my father's merchants, though I cannot help speaking a little of them. When he came back, as I said before, he was full of the firm. On such a day he had dined with Claw, and met Mr. Canning, Conversation Sharpe, and a very pleasant and agreeable young man, though quite a revolutionist, Mr. Thomas Duncombe. He had quite meant to write down all the clever things he heard, but somehow he put it off from day to day till

it was too late. Then he told of Claw's pictures, and statues, and books ; and how he patronised a Scotchman, David Wilkie, whose works were really of great promise. Another day, too, Claw took him to dine with the Goldsmiths' Company, of which Claw was that year Master, or Warden, or whatever it is. Such a dinner, and such plate ! There, too, he tasted turtle for the first time, and confessed that Claw had made him have two helps. Then Tooth asked him to dine at five o'clock at the Bedford Hotel in Covent Garden Market ; and they had marrow-bones, a delicacy undreamt of before ; and after that they went to see John Kemble play Hamlet, and Mrs. Siddons the Queen ; and another day they went to see Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth ; and all through both tragedies my father confessed he still thought of the marrow-bones of the Bedford Hotel, and wondered how it was that the Warwickshire marrow-bones, on which his own Devon bullocks so often said their prayers to the Power who sends sweet grass, never had any marrow in them, and how it always seemed to run up to the innermost end of the bone out of the reach of the marrow-spoon, like the quicksilver in a barometer, when it sinks below zero. Even in the famous soliloquy over poor Yorick's skull my father's fancy still wandered on, and he won-

dered whether there was any marrow in Yorick's shanks, and why a man shouldn't moralise over a marrow-bone as well as over a skull.

Mr. Nail also belonged to a City Company. He was that year Renter Warden of the Fishmongers', and my father dined with him too, and he used to say that he could not tell whether the Goldsmiths' or the Fishmongers' gave the better dinner. Perhaps the turtle was better at the Goldsmiths', and the fish at the Fishmongers', but then it must never be forgotten that first turtle is, like first love, a thing altogether apart and exquisite, not to be compared with any love or turtle that may come upon us afterwards. Another thing in which the Goldsmiths excelled the Fishmongers was this. After dinner they gave each guest a box of sweetmeats to carry away with him; thus suffering him, unlike the little boy in the story, to fill his pockets as well as his stomach. Besides, this box gave a kind of reality to my father's trip to London, for it was brought down to Warwickshire, and shared amongst the children—all save me, for did I not belong to Aunt Mandeville, and did she not exercise her right of property on this occasion too, and forbid my father and mother to ruin the child's digestion with sweetmeats?

CHAPTER III.

HOW MY FATHER MADE UP HIS MIND TO GO TO THE WEST INDIES.

NOTHING of any note happened with us in Warwickshire for some time. My father wrote to his merchants, and his merchants to him, but no one knew whether anything was going on, till one morning he looked hard across the breakfast-table at my mother and said,—

‘I must go to the West Indies.’

I do not know, if he had said I must go to the moon, that my mother would have been more astonished. Certainly it would have been less trouble; for if a man makes up his mind to go to the moon to the moon he must go. It is not far, only to the nearest lunatic asylum; but the West Indies are a long way off, the voyage costs money and breaks up a family circle. Certainly it is worse to go to the West Indies than to the moon. I do not know if my mother was at first aware of the full extent of my father’s perversity,

but she saw perplexities of all kinds ahead, and speedily entrenching herself behind a whole array of woman's reasons, she resisted the enemy.

'Go to the West Indies, Halfacre! Why should you go to the West Indies?'

'Why, you see, my dear, Claw, Tooth, and Nail say it is usual for a new proprietor to show himself among his tenants—I mean among his slaves,—they work more willingly when they see the man to whom they belong; the managers and overseers need the master's eye; there are numberless improvements to be made in the manufacture of sugar; by the new vacuum-pan molasses will be annihilated, and the new centrifugal boiler crystallizes the juice in half the time consumed under the old process. I have just given Messrs. Cake and Nail, who always made Colonel Ratoon's machinery, a large order for new vacuum-pans, boilers, condensers, pumps, and crystallizers. One of their patent cane-crushers, too, I must have. A Scotch engineer must go out, with two skilled mechanics, to fix all this machinery, and this, again, will be best done under the master's eye. Added to this, they tell me the voyage is safe and pleasant. I will go out in the *Enchantress*, one of Claw, Tooth, and Nail's ships. She is a fast sailer, and I shall be there in six weeks.'

Here my father paused to take breath, as well he might, for it was by far the longest private speech he had ever been known to make. It was a good deal longer, in fact, than the famous speech which he made at Warwick, when proposing the judge's health at the assizes. As for my mother, she was utterly bewildered with his vacuum-pans, and condensers, and crystallizers, and cane-crushers, so she wisely disregarded them, and clung to the fact of his voyage across the sea, and as soon as he paused she struck in,—

‘And, Halfacre, if it takes you six weeks to get there, how long will you stay, and when will you come back?’

My father had been so full of going that he had not considered these points; his fancy had landed him in the region of the molasses which he was prepared to annihilate; but having, in his mind's eye, set his foot on the shore, seen his slaves, and set up his machinery, he thought he had gone far enough.

‘How long shall I stay? and when will I come back? I declare I never thought of that. I suppose I shall stay till my business is done; till I have mastered the details requisite for my new position; till the machinery is in thorough working order; till the vacuum-pans ——’

How much further he would have gone on

no one can tell, but just at that moment in glided my Aunt Mandeville, the only person in the world of whom my father was afraid.

‘Why, brother Halfacre, what’s all this?—You are not High Sheriff, or Knight of the Shire, and yet you are rehearsing a public speech to your wife.’

Then seeing the tears in my mother’s eyes, she went on:—‘Sister-in-law, what is it all about?’

‘Oh, sister Mandeville,’ sobbed my mother, ‘here’s Halfacre going to the West Indies. I know it’s all the doings of that odious Claw, Tooth, and Nail.’

‘More fool he!’ said my aunt. ‘All this comes of a man leaving his family for a month, and spending his time in guzzling and junketing up in London. Claw, Tooth, and Nail, indeed! I’d claw, tooth, and nail them, if I could get hold of them.’

And so my aunt went on scolding my father up hill and down dale, for ever so long.

Now I don’t know whether my readers will agree with me when I say that women are strange things. You walk along the streets and see a man thrashing his wife; just take the wife’s part and see what will happen; ten to one she will tell you it is all her own fault,

and that she deserves all she gets. Something of the same kind happened in our family circle on that occasion. When my mother first heard of my father's intention to go to the West Indies she felt as if some one had beaten her black and blue; nay, she felt as though my father had beaten her; but when Aunt Mandeville came to the rescue, and gave my father this verbal thrashing, the wife triumphed over the woman in my mother's heart; and when Mrs. Mandeville ended her tirade by another 'To the West Indies, indeed! more fool he,' my mother resented the imputation on her husband's sense, and said:

'Indeed, sister Mandeville, why shouldn't Halfacre go to the West Indies if he chooses?'

'Of course he may, if he is silly enough,' retorted my aunt; 'and so may you too. Go with him, by all means, if you are fool enough.'

And so she slipped through the garden door, shutting it behind her with something like a bang, ran down the walk, and drove back to Mandeville Hall in her pony-chaise.

Next morning it was noised through the village that Squire Halfacre and Mrs. Halfacre and some of the children were going to the West Indies to see old Colonel Ratoon's estates.

Some of the children. Yes, that was just

the difficulty ; which of the children ? From which of her children could a mother bear to part ? And yet she had to bear it. Doctor Mindererus, I believe, had a sly nudge from my father, and he it was who decided the matter. Run down a general practitioner ! Live in the country and do it, and die, or deserve to die. Not believe in the apothecary, thou atheist ! May you be sleepless and have no narcotic near you ; break your leg in a land where there is not wood enough to make a splint ; may you be in Africa, at Timbuctoo, where every man who crawls on his belly before the Emperor must be clean shaven, and with a six years' beard ; may you have ten minutes given you to shave without soap ! O unbeliever in apothecaries, believe, lest worse befall you ; at least, for a little while, through this chapter. Believe in Dr. Mindererus, our surgeon and apothecary, who at my father's wink or nudge altered his opinion, from which there was no appeal, as to which children were to be left behind. My eldest brother, John, my father's son and heir, on whom Halfacre Hall was strictly entailed, was a big boy, already at a public school. There could be no question as to the imprudence of interfering with his studies, so he was left behind. Then there was Tom ; he too would soon follow John's footsteps.

Meantime he had better be left where he was, at a private school; and while Dr. Mindererus was thinking of Tom he thought he might as well think of William, only ten, no doubt, and young to go to school. But then Tom was doing so well with Dr. Cutbrush, why shouldn't William go with him after the holidays? So those three were provided for. What would have happened had not Walter died I cannot tell. He would have been seven; too young to leave, and too old to take. God had provided. He had taken Walter to Himself. My brother was far away from this land of lessons, on an endless holiday. I came next, and over my infantine bones there was a battle fiercer than any fought in the dark ages for jaw-bone, or thigh-bone, or back-bone of the greatest saint. Did I not belong to Aunt Mandeville? Who then should dare to take me from her?

'Take the child to the West Indies; take him to the very land where sugar is grown, and you will bring him back with a sallow face and swollen liver.'

But my mother would not hear of parting with me yet; I had come to fill Walter's place. I was but five; when I was older Aunt Mandeville might have me; when I was eight say, and as my mother said this she laughed in her heart,

for she made sure that long before I was eight, or anything like it, she would be safe back with all of us in Old England, and there would be no separation. Poor mother! My father, I really believe, would have given in. He had gained his point as to going to the West Indies, and he would have thrown me in as a peace-offering to his sister. But men propose and women dispose, and it was now my mother's turn to give Dr. Mindererus a nudge. I said I was always a healthy child; but all at once the doctor discovered the germs and seeds of countless diseases in my constitution. My lungs had not been so sound last winter as he could have wished; I had never quite got over the croup. If I could escape the ungenial English winter, it would be well. A sea-voyage was just what I wanted. Cane-juice was very fattening, and perhaps a diet of yams, *Convolvulus Battata*, and bananas, *Musa Sapientum*, would make me a new child. My aunt, against whom this battery was erected and aimed, was proof against everything till the doctor began to talk of *Convolvulus Battata* and *Musa Sapientum*. The botanical name for yams and bananas perplexed her as much as the vacuum-pans had puzzled my mother. Again, as every one fears something or somebody, as there is a skeleton in every family, let me say that the one

thing that Aunt Mandeville feared, except her servants, was her medical attendant. She would argue and beat out of the field any one save Dr. Mindererus and Brooks her butler; but when the doctor declared that it was as much as my life was worth if I stayed behind, and backed up his assertion by *Convolvulus Battata* and *Oleum Ricini*, Aunt Mandeville was utterly routed, and let me go on the condition that I was to return to England and belong to her when I was eight years old. So, thanks to Dr. Mindererus, I and two younger children were to go with my father and mother to the West Indies in the good ship *Enchantress*.

CHAPTER IV.

HOW WE WENT TO THE WEST INDIES.

It was a sad break up at Halfacre Hall, in the year 182-; but at last we got away. It was just then that I began to recollect, and I well remember how my Aunt Mandeville bade us good-bye, and stood as upright as a dart, waving her handkerchief, as our huge creaking carriage rolled off. We were to post from Warwickshire to town, and thence, after my father had had a farewell meeting with Claw, Tooth, and Nail in Vulture Yard, we were to post on to Portsmouth, where we were to find the *Enchantress* lying at the Motherbank off Ryde. In one carriage were my father, my mother, myself and a little brother. On the rumble was my father's valet, who had persuaded his master to let him go with him. In a chariot behind were our nurse and the baby, and my mother's maid. We posted by day, and slept by night at inns. On this journey I will not dwell. I only wish that any man, woman, or child who abuses railways were con-

demned to post, first from Warwickshire to London, and thence across England in search of the *Enchantress*. My father's visit in London to the firm was 'most satisfactory.' The partners were all smiles, and assured him that, with the new machinery with which the *Enchantress* was half laden, 'a new era of prosperity for the Two Rivers Estate was about to be inaugurated.' I have reason to believe that those were the very words which Claw used. He was great at big words, and if he had his way there would not have been any names of places on the map shorter than Mesopotamia or Constantinople, nor any ordinary word shorter than 'vicissitude.' And so we started from London and posted to Portsmouth, and at Portsmouth we stayed at the George Hotel for a week, waiting for the *Enchantress*, which never came, but instead of her a letter, dated 'Plymouth,' from Captain Spark, regretting that the *Enchantress* had been blown by a fierce north-easterly gale through the Downs and past Portsmouth; having been only just able to get into Plymouth Sound, where, under the shelter of the Breakwater, she was then lying and only waiting for us. The letter ended with a P.S., expressing Captain Spark's desire that we should post day and night to Plymouth lest the wind should chop round to S.W. or west and we should be wind-

bound. So we posted to Plymouth, making long days and short nights. Posting day and night with babies was out of the question. It was bitterly cold, and I was very often hungry in spite of a box of Leman's biscuits which we had with us; but at last we reached Plymouth, with no other accident than that in passing through Southampton, just after we left Portsmouth on the 5th of November, some wicked boys threw a squib at my father's valet and set him on fire; at least, so I thought at the time. The carriage came to a dead stop; my father alighted, and so did the flaming valet, and the offenders were soundly thrashed. In those days there were no police, only 'Charlies,' and travellers had sometimes to take the law into their own hands, and very heavy their hands often were. Then the valet being extinguished, and our honour avenged, the carriage rolled on again, and I fell asleep.

But here we were at Plymouth; glad to get there, to eat, to sleep, to rest; but it was only for a night. Very early next morning Captain Spark came. He was a stout, thickset man, with a copper-coloured face, a hare-lip, and a nose very like the North Foreland. If any of my readers have not seen that headland, I can't help it. They have, most of them, never seen Jeru-

saalem, yet they believe in it. Let them show their faith, and believe that Captain Spark's nose was like the North Foreland. His hare-lip somewhat checked his flow of speech; at least, he spoke a good deal, and spluttered more, but most of what he said was lost. Perhaps what he said went out sideways by his ears, but at any rate very little of it came out of his mouth. He felt he was not an orator, and hence his sentences were few, sharp, and laconic.

'Come on shore, sir,—ship ready to sail,—wind fair,—when will you come on board?'

'Oh, directly, Captain Spark,' said my father; 'we will get ready at once; but won't you take something after your row from the *Enchantress*?'.

'Thank you, sir,' spluttered out the captain; 'glass of sherry wine,—cold morning,—spray,—drenched to the skin.'

The sherry wine, as the captain called it, came and vanished with great rapidity, and then the captain went down to hire a large shore-boat to take off the servants with our trunks. As for ourselves, we were to go off in his gig. Into the gig, then, we got, baby and all. In these days there were no steam-tugs; no, nor any mackintoshes. There was some sea on, and a brisk wind, making the spray

fly. We, too, were drenched by the time we reached the *Enchantress*, as she lay pitching at anchor just inside the Breakwater.'

But 'never mind,' I still seem to hear my father say, 'here we are alongside.' Down came a chair without legs, let down by a pulley, and into this first my mother, then nurse and baby, and last my mother's maid and myself were placed, our feet covered with bunting, and so we were whipped up to the deck, pretty much as coals are whipped up from a collier's hold. I remember seeing my father scramble up the side just like an old tom-cat up a tree. I was wet and cold enough as I stood on the deck; but for all that I remember my father, while the anchor was being weighed, pointing out to me two old three-deckers, the *Princess Charlotte* and the *Britannia*.

'There, my boy! yonder are Old England's wooden walls; and so long as these last she need fear no Frenchman.'

Poor man! he spoke with his heart full of Trafalgar, and Nelson, and Waterloo, and the Corsican Usurper, and St. Helena. Little did he think that the time would come when we should call the wooden walls of Old England mere 'match-boxes.' But so it is, *mutat terra vices*—'the earth changes her shifts'—and very

queer shifts she sometimes has to make up her mind to wear.

But this is no time to talk of shifts or match-boxes. The anchor is [weighed, and we are off. Now we are outside the Breakwater, and the *Enchantress* makes such a bow to the sea that she fairly dips her nose into the green waves. I was not at all sick, and rather enjoying the strange sight, when nurse's voice cried, 'Come to your mamma, Master Teddy!' and in a trice her strong arms were round my body, and I was dragged down below and put into a berth, whence I did not emerge for several days.

A voyage has its nasty points—sea-sickness being the nastiest of them—but it is not all nasty. I remember trying to get out of the dark cabin, and to crawl on deck, and how nurse handed me back. My father and nurse were both very ill, and continued so till we had crossed the Bay of Biscay. Nurse was the first to get her sea-legs and appetite, and then she took me on deck. I remember the green, rolling waves, and how we ran before the breeze, under easy sail, across the dreaded bay. Then we passed close to Madeira, whence, in the good old days before emancipation and *oidium*, West Indians got their wine—Tinta, Palhetino, Buol, Sercial, and Malmsey—peace to your lees, you

are extinct before the grape disease, just as emancipation has destroyed your best customers ! Teneriffe, too, we sighted, with its Peak, in the shadow of which we sailed for hours. We ought not to have seen it at all, Captain Spark said ; and then came something out of his hare-lip, a string of strange words, not one of which I could understand then, though I have heard some of them since.

‘What’s that the captain’s telling you?’ asked nurse of the second mate, to whom a string of these strange words had been just addressed.

‘Well, marm, you see that’s the way the captain has of saying his prayers, and pretty regularly he says them too.’

‘Why,’ said nurse, ‘I thought no one said their prayers more than twice a-day, but the captain uses those words, or something like them, at all hours of the day.’

‘Very true, marm,’ said the mate ; ‘but you see our captain is very religious—leastways, he is almost always praying.’

What made Captain Spark say his prayers so hard just then was, that he knew, on coming on deck in the morning, that we were out of our course, and ought never to have seen the Peak of Teneriffe at all, and so he gave vent to his devotions in a special service, intended

for the eternal welfare of the second mate's eyes and limbs, ultimately including his whole body, and even his soul. The second mate had the watch, and had suffered the helmsman to steer a wrong course.

The course was soon set straight, for in spite of his prayers and hare-lip, Captain Spark was a thorough seaman, and had crossed the Atlantic so often that he knew every whale and grampus in it. We got a good 'slant,' I think he called it, and soon got into the Trades, which bore the good ship merrily on. Then it was really a happy time on board ship; the sun was very hot over head, but we lay under the awning and listened to the stories of the sailors, who were busy mending sails. I remember well their great needles, which they kept in rams'-horns filled with grease.

The captain now seldom or ever said his prayers, or if he said them it was in his own cabin. My father and mother had long since got over their sickness, and appeared on deck. The baby crawled about, and we were all very hungry at dinner-time. I forgot to say that we had the whole ship to ourselves, and altogether, though our life was dull, it was not unpleasant. Every now and then something happened to stir us up. A thunderstorm at

night—that was before Snow's patent lightning-conductors—and I was not natural philosopher enough then to know the danger which a ship runs of being struck by lightning in mid-ocean. But I could see how grand and beautiful a thunderstorm at sea is. We saw a water-spout, too, and Captain Spark fired a gun at it and broke it, and then he spluttered out an explanation of its danger. We caught a shark with a great hook baited with a bit of salt pork. He was a big fellow who had followed the ship for days, feeding on our offal. I believe he knew as well as any one when we were going to kill a pig. His love for salt pork proved fatal to him; and there he flapped his tail on deck, and grinned with his ugly mouth, till the carpenter came with an axe and chopped his back in two; and even then he wriggled and grinned for a while. I beg leave so say that this was not *the* shark that was found with a whole soldier, musket and all, in his belly, but we did find in him some of our dead fowls, which had come to an untimely end, and also one of baby's pinafores which had blown overboard, and been snapped up and swallowed. The fowls had died by the pip or homesickness, and had been tossed overboard. The sailors ate the shark, and we tasted him, and I remember being told that

it was like bad beef. And last, though not least, we killed a pig once a-week.

That was an excitement which surpassed thunderstorms, water-spouts, and sharks. In my juvenile arithmetic, one pig-sticking was worth twenty water-spouts, ten thunderstorms, and five sharks. It began so early in the morning, and it lasted so long, quite up to supper-time, if we reckon the satisfaction arising from eating the flesh of the slain. Then it was as good as thirty alarums. What family would not be early risers if they killed a pig every morning? They couldn't help it. I am sure if the shark knew that a pig was going to be killed, the pigs themselves knew what was about to befall them. All through the night a presentiment of coming evil hung over the long-boat in which they lived. They grunted a *De profundis porcorum*, a low mass of the stye, about midnight. About dawn the minds of the piggies were made up as to the member of the family about to be slain. I suppose they knew their fattest, and could pick him out as well as the butcher. There they stood all round him, grunting a bass while the victim whined a treble. At last the butcher looked into the long-boat, knife in mouth. He leant over, and with both hands felt them all round, while the concert

continued in louder and louder strain. All at once he made a dash at the victim and caught him by the leg, while piggy laid hold of the thwarts of the long-boat with his teeth. Now the grunting, howling, groaning, and whining are incessant. Pull, butcher! pull, piggy! and in the first encounter piggy wins. The butcher falls head first into the long-boat, adds oaths—strangely like Captain Spark's prayers—to the tumult, and retires for awhile, only to return with two strong sailors. They all climb over into the boat; they all three seize piggy, who howls and squeals, and kicks and bites. The other pigs crowd round, squealing, and biting the calves of the assassins, who repay them with kicks and curses. They drag their victim out of the boat, hold him down over the gunwale, and the butcher does the dreadful deed, while piggy protests in the name of all porkdom against this tyrannical exercise of the right of the strongest.

Just so did poor Robert Blum, *Mitglied der Frankfurter National Versammlung*, protest to Field-Marshal Nugent, who was leading him off to be shot on the *glacis* at Vienna, that he was being shot in violation of all right and good feeling; and just so did Nugent, like our butcher, reply '*Das ist nicht die Frage, mein lieber Herr*'

—‘My good sir, that is not the question;’ and so with much clamour on the part of Blum, and great *bonhomie* on the part of the Field-Marshal, who went on smoking his cigar, ‘the member of the Frankfort National Assembly’ passed out of this wicked world and was buried.

But to return to our pig. We did not bury him, we ate him. Hardly had his last cries been hushed when we had his fry at breakfast. Many people do not like what they call ‘inwards.’ I do. Liver and bacon are my delight; *fagoto di vitello*, as they call it in Italy, where it is especially recommended for invalids; goose giblets, whether in soup or pie; I can even sympathise with that clergyman in the fens who had three small livings in those marshes, and used to ride about and hold a full service in each every Sunday, eating a bullock’s heart and currant jelly between each. But what is liver and bacon or bullock’s-heart to pig’s-fry? Go on board ship every one of you that refuse to believe this; be awake for hours listening to the fearful din which sounds the knell of a pig; pace the deck in the fresh breeze for three quarters of an hour, waiting for your breakfast after the deed is done, and then dare to say that you do not like pig’s-fry when the steward’s head emerges from the companion, and utters the welcome word ‘Break-

fast,' and you rush down to find a dish of that dainty smoking on the board.

On board the *Enchantress* we all liked pig's-fry, and I am sure even baby would have eaten it if he had been weaned.

So we sped along, and as we neared the Antilles the sun grew hotter and the sea bluer, and we met great beds of sea-weed, and saw whales spouting, and grampuses blowing, and turtles basking on the surface. Think of that, Claw, Tooth, and Nail! Turtles basking, green-fat, calipash and calipee, sunning itself into maturity and flavour, all to grace your civic feasts! Flying-fish sprang on board with their strange flitting, something between a fish's leap and a bat's flight, from one rolling wave to another. Dolphins played alongside, and we rigged out the 'grains,' or dolphin striker, and, with unerring aim, the boatswain launched it at the unwary stranger, and there he was fast held by rope and iron. Him, too, we hauled on board, and there he lay with all his brilliant hues flashing and changing in the sun, till at last they faded away as a bright sunset dies away, and he grew one dull uniform grey blue. Him, too, we ate, after duly admiring him.

And now we fairly wished the voyage were over. We were all very well,—so far, all the better

for our travels,—but we longed to be on land, and to stretch our legs. How glad, then, were we to see land and to pass island after island, green cones of verdure springing out of the blue sea, so refreshing by their contrast to what the poets call ‘the azure main.’ So we ran on for a day or two, till one morning Captain Spark, having taken an observation, said that if nothing happened we should sight St. Saccharissa by that time to-morrow.

Now, reader, don’t rush off to your map of the Caribbean Sea, and try to find that island. You had better come along with me and let me show it you, for to that island we are bound, and no other.

It was called St. Saccharissa in the days of King Charles II. of fast and loose memory, and it was so called, when settled, in honour of Waller’s Saccharissa. If you are a High Churchman you will, perhaps, protest that there is no such saint as Saccharissa in the Bollandist collection or that of Surius, and that you cannot find her name with a red letter in any calendar, which protest I duly note and meet by another. In no calendar that I know of is our Charles I. a saint, and yet that Chapel at Tunbridge Wells, which lies in three parishes and two counties, and which was built when Charles II. was king,

was dedicated to *Saint Charles the Martyr*. Well! just in the same way was *Saccharissa* sainted, and her worship still survives, while that of *Charles I.* has faded. She is the patron saint of sugar, white and brown, revered in all nurseries, remembered on all twelfth-cakes, adored in Scotch sweeties, sugar-plums, barley-sugar, sugar-candy, lemon-rock, and all lozenges. Rightly, then, was she canonized, and well named was our sugar island after *Saccharissa*, for its yield of saccharine matter was most abundant.

The captain was as good as his word—nay, better. At daybreak we sighted *St. Saccharissa*, and, running down from windward before a good trade-wind, about noon we doubled one horn of a deep horseshoe bay, and there, right before us, lay *Princetown*, the capital of the island. We stood in, and cast anchor about half a mile from land; but even before we were fast to the land we were surrounded by a small fleet of boats, manned by negroes, and steered by whites and mulattos.

‘All as black as a coal, ma’am,’ I heard nurse say to my mother, who was busy below. ‘And a-most naked.’

My father was on deck, and soon made the acquaintance of his island merchants, who sold him salt-fish and farine and ale-wives to feed his

slaves, and lumber and hogsheads and puncheons for his estate, and sugar and rum. A canny Scot, who knew well, not only how to make both ends meet, but to lap over! His manager, too, was there, who had been old Colonel Ratoon's right hand, and who now came to see his new master. Two Rivers was on the westward side of the island, and so he had sighted the *Enchantress* almost as soon as we made the land; and, getting into his gig, had driven into town post-haste.

So here we were at St. Saccharissa, and the next thing was to land. There was leave-taking of Captain Spark, who put us ashore again in his gig; and this time we were not drenched to the skin. But my father had not nearly seen the last of him, for the *Enchantress* was half-full of his machinery. All this time—I beg the Scotch engineer's pardon, and the skilled mechanics' too—I had forgotten to speak of them. But this is in their favour; for had they made themselves very disagreeable, they would have been on my mind. The fact was, we saw little of them. They lived in the fore-cabin by themselves. At first they were very miserable; but afterwards they brightened up, and on week-days sang songs, and on Sundays psalms; but my mother used to say the week-day tunes and the Sabbath tunes were all so alike that she would not have known whether it

was a profane or a spiritual song that was being droned out, had it not been for the day of the week. We left them behind in the ship to look after the landing of the machinery in open boats. The sailors gave way, the captain steered, and in ten minutes he uttered the well-known word, 'Bow!' Up sprang the bowman, and grasped his boat-hook. In another second, 'Oars!' followed; they were lifted aloft, and laid under the gunwale; the keel grated on the yellow sand of that tideless bay. A gang of negroes dashed into the serf and laid hold of the painter, and hauled us up nearly high and dry. Some of us jumped and some of us were lifted out, and there at last stood the heads of the family of Halfacre on the shore of St. Saccharissa.

CHAPTER V.

HOW WE LIVED IN THE WEST INDIES.

As this is a story written more of my manhood than my childhood, I am not going to bore you with any of my performances as an infant prodigy. We must get on. There is much to tell; and this whole book is more my life in glimpses than a biography chapter and verse. Where were we? Yes! landed in St. Saccharissa on the beach. The town of Princetown! Such a Princetown! Nature had made the bay lovely, and man made it hideous. The town of Princetown was one long, straggling, circular street, following the horseshoe of the bay. On the side of this thoroughfare facing the sea, or rather turning their backs on the sea, which smiled at the insult out of its blue dimples, were stores and wharves, piles of lumber—that is, Canadian timber, hogsheads of salt fish, puncheons of rum, and puncheons of oats; jetties that had not the courage to run far out into the sea, flagstaffs, cocoa-nut trees, mangoes. That side

of the street was given up to the merchants—to the *Bourgeoisie*, as the planters would have called them—to shopkeepers, in short—to owners of dry-goods' stores, who sold everything. On the other side of the street were the town-houses of the planters—of the aristocracy of the island, whose ancestors held town 'lots,' and had built houses on them. And very good houses too! To the town lot of Colonel Ratoon we were now led. Fancy Squire Halfacre, of Halfacre Hall, Warwickshire, being led to a town-house at Princetown, in the island of St. Saccharissa! But no one could say it was not an excellent house. Even nurse and the valet and Mrs. Earl, my mother's maid, confessed it was big enough. True, nurse said it would be a mercy if baby didn't catch his death of cold in a house which had no windows on one side. This was nurse's ignorance. She did not know that at St. Saccharissa the wind always blows one way, except in a hurricane; and so a house needs no glass, but only shutters or blinds—*jealousies*, we used to call them—on the other. It was all of wood too; and there were cockroaches and mosquitoes; but we did not find these out till night—or rather it was they that found us out. We all ought to have let down our mosquito nets; but no one told us to do so, and so the next morning my father and

mother looked as if they had the smallpox; the baby's eyes were bunged up; my lips had been gnawed by a cockroach; and as for Mrs. Earl, she declared her complexion would never recover the attacks of the invaders. B—s and fleas she had heard of; but 'them nasty flying things, she couldn't abide them.'

But the house was a good one. There were galleries, and verandahs, and splendid bath-rooms, and round it was a garden planted with choice trees. A little way behind it the ground rose rapidly, and ran, if I may so speak, up hill, as though it were afraid of the dancing surf, a hundred yards off. I am afraid to say that I think Colonel Ratoon's lot was unhealthy. We were none of us well when we got up; and, warned in time, my father called in the Dr. Mindererus of Princetown, an old army surgeon, who was fire-rum-and-fever-proof. He had a queer mode of expressing himself, but he knew well what he was about. After my mother had stated all our ailments, the doctor said:

'It's my opeenion'—here he snuffed the air audibly once or twice, as if challenging the fever to do battle. 'It's my opeenion that there's just no spot in the king's domeenions where a man might catch Yellow Fever more easily than this. Just look, there's an open town-drain right in

front, and between the house and the hull there's a hollow that catches the water and makes a swamp, and across that swamp the land-breeze blows at night right into the house, and makes it a fever-trap. Many a night I've spent here with Colonel Ratoon, and many a jorum of sangaree we drank, and many a game of picquet we have played here together; but we two were the only whites who slept a week in the house without catching fever. I do not say Yellow Fever at first, but all marsh-fevers in Princetown turn to Yellow. Now I am left, and the colonel is gone, and I advise you to go too.'

'Go!' said my mother, who thought the doctor wished to frighten her out of the house; 'where should we go?'

'To Two Rivers, to be sure. There has never been Yellow Fever, or any other fever, on that estate that I heard of. The house stands on a cliff, a ridge between two streams which thoroughly drain the land, and close to the house the ridge breaks off into a bluff over the sea, sheer down three hundred feet or more. Go at once to Two Rivers.'

'But why should we go so soon?' urged my mother, who wished to get settled a little before she took another flight.

'Why, because women are slow and fevers

quick in this country. All women want spurring here, but no rein will hold a fever. Cast your eyes over the way to neighbour M'Culloch's store. One of the articles he keeps constantly on hand, and advertises weekly in the 'Princetown Gazette' are English elm coffins. Coffins of all sizes, for all ages. Baby-coffins and men-coffins. This is a country, Mrs. Halfacre, where a child is born at dawn, and both mother and babe are buried at sunset. Nothing is lazy in this land of the sun except new-comers, and they sometimes lay their bones in Princetown while they are making their plans for going up the country.'

And with these words the doctor turned on his heel, went down the gallery, mounted his American pacer, and ambled off in the broiling noonday sun.

'I don't believe a word he says. He only wants to frighten us,' said my mother. But my father knew better. That first morning, when mosquito-stung he could take no rest, he had risen at cockcrow, and gone to see Colonel Ratoon's grave in Princetown Churchyard. He found it, and read the slab in memory of 'Colonel Ratoon, late Commander of His Majesty's 2nd Regiment of Foot. One of the survivors of the St. Domingo and Walcheren Expeditions, who, after a glorious career in the Peninsular War,

retired to his estates in this island, where he died at the good old age of seventy-seven, in the year of our Lord 182-.' 'A good old age,' thought my father; 'seventy-seven! seven years more than the Psalmist allowed. The colonel, I have heard, was a free liver. With care a man might live to ninety in this island.'

Then he turned to other graves, and read, 'Sir Fretful Firebrand, late Governor of this island, greatly distinguished as a naval commander during the late war, in which he fought the famous action of the *Daredevil* against the *Snapping Turtle*, who was prematurely cut off by fever in the second year of his governorship, and the fifty-second year of his age.'

Then his eye fell on another; 'Sir Anthony Quibble, late Chief Justice of this island and the islands of Manakoo and Agouti; whose legal talents procured him this appointment, in which, however, fate did not suffer him to develop them. Cut off by fever within a year of his landing, in the forty-third year of his age.'

On the same stone was carved, 'And to Lady Quibble, relict of the above, who died of Fever, having survived her husband six months.'

A little further on was a stone in memory of the 'wife and six children of David McCrosky, Esq., Merchant in Princetown, who died in one

week during the recent outbreak of Yellow Fever in this island.'

By this time my father's curiosity was satisfied. It was time for breakfast. The sun was hot, so he put up his umbrella, and went home, thinking how odd it was that Colonel Ratoon should have lived till seventy-seven.

This graveyard visit was still in his mind when the doctor came; and when the doctor went my father was quite ready to go to Two Rivers. He had his way without frightening my mother very much. The doctor's opinion, he assured her, was not to be despised. The sooner we got up to Two Rivers the better. It was but a drive. We would go that very afternoon, when the sun was not so hot.

So we started. My father drove my mother in a gig, and the manager drove my mother's maid and nurse and the children in a sort of American waggon, called a 'Deerborne.' As for the valet, he was mounted on the doctor's pacer, who kindly lent him for the occasion. Alongside of each carriage ran a stout negro lad to show the way, whose language and gesticulations were most amusing.

'Oh, Massa Halfacre! New Massa Halfacre! stop bit! Massa's buckra servant no sit right in him stirrup. Him toe turn out like Jack

Spaniard. Him nebber ride a race, and nebber win one.'

All this was addressed to my father by the sable pair of running footmen to induce him to wait for the unhappy valet, whose knowledge of horsemanship was derived from seeing the North Warwickshire hounds throw off at Halfacre Gorse.

At last the procession started at no great pace. The road was not bad as a road; but then it was never level. It was all ups and downs, and very steep ones too, rising and falling one in twenty, and taking all manner of curves round bluffs overhanging the sea. To creep round these bluffs, where the great rolling spurs that ran down from the backbone of the mountain which filled the centre of the island broke short off at the sea-coast, was the great object of the road-maker. The face of the bluff had been cut off into a groove or notch; and along this, with a cliff on one side sheer down into the sea, and a steep wall of earth on the other, our procession passed. My mother shut her eyes, and so did nurse and her maid. The manager was quite cool, and so was my father, whose theory was that a road by which every one went every day must be safe on any given day for any given person. As for the

unhappy valet he had long before the first bluff given over the guidance of his steed to one of our sable footmen, who was delighted to show 'massa's serbant' the way to 'Two Ribber.' Sometimes he led him quite close to the cliff, and kept him with one leg dangling over the precipice. As for the horse it was used to the work—as sure-footed as a goat and as quiet as a lamb. There was no danger therefore, except in the valet's imagination; but that was quite enough to make him shiver and shake in his saddle.

'Oh,' said his tormentor, 'massa serbant got de feber. Him come on so wid a shake and a shibber. Stop bit; next works I get massa's serbant a glass of new rum. Noting stop feber so soon as new rum.' And, true to his word, at the next estate round the bluff he begged a bottle of rum in my father's name, out of which he gave the valet a glass, which scorched his throat like liquid fire. The rest the rogue put away in his capacious pocket.

So we wound slowly on round bluff after bluff; till at last, after some twelve miles or so, which seemed at least twenty to the rest of the party, and a whole eternity to the unhappy valet, the manager called out to my father, who was in front, to stop; and then, pointing across a wide valley to the next ridge and bluff, said:

‘There you see Two Rivers.’

Of course, as the second river was on the other side of the ridge, we could not see it; but the one on this was a fine mountain stream, which came rushing down the hill at the top of the valley, which gradually widened as it neared the sea, and at last spread out into a broad savannah or pasture. All up the hill, on each side of the valley, the soil was scored and trenched for sugar-canes, and the young crop looked green and lovely after the rains.

On the ridge, as I have already said, stood the house,—the ‘Great House,’ as it was called,—of Two Rivers, and towards it we slowly made our way down the ridge on this side, across the river at a ford full of stones, which afforded new fun to Sambo and new terror to the valet, then up the valley to the tail of the ridge, and then along the crest of the ridge itself, through an avenue of cocoa-nut trees, till we stood before the house in which Colonel Ratoon had lived and died.

I am sure I cannot tell whether at that moment my father thought it worth his while to have come so far. Whether it occurred to him that he would have been just as much owner of Two Rivers had he stayed quietly at home at Halfacre Hall and been master of his West Indian estate by deputy. But whatever his thoughts

and feelings, like a wise man he kept them to himself, and merely handed my mother out of the gig, saying, 'Welcome, my dear, to Two Rivers.'

At the doorway swarmed a host of negroes—house servants busy doing nothing, and taking stock of their new owners. First and foremost was an old grizzle-headed fellow named Endeavour, who belied his name, seeing that he endeavoured to do nothing except to stand and snigger at the new comers.

By this time the manager had come up in the deerborne, and he broke the ice by calling out—'Here, you, Endeavour, Jackson, Peggy, and the rest of you, why don't you help your new mistress out of the gig, and those children?'

This was the signal for Endeavour to speak. 'Hi, Massa Manager,' he retorted, 'sure we wait for Manager to help Massa out. What we see Massa Manager do, we do too. We 'fraid to do anyting widout Massa order. Den why hurry Massa Halfacre? Massa Ratoon always say, "Nebber hurry, Endeavour; try not to hurry; de day is long enough for de work." So we got into de way of nebber hurrying in the ole Massa's time, and we hab no time to learn to hurry yet in new Massa's time.'

After delivering this splendid defence of idle-

ness *ore rotundo*, Endeavour went up to my father, and said :

‘How you do, Sare? I hope you quite well after de v’yage, and n’ung Missis and the piccanninies.’

My father thanked him in all our names, and bade him lead the way into the house.

So into the house the whole train went. The whites or buckras first, and then the blacks. Nurse holding up her hands at their number, and wondering how much a-week it cost to keep all them niggers on board wages. The vestibule was a spacious hall of Bermuda cedar, paved with marble which Colonel Ratoon had sent for from the Levant. In the midst was a fountain which threw up a jet of water, and in and out of the ‘jealousies’ flitted humming-birds, while the green lizards looked down in their sidelong, curious way, as if they quite understood that a new owner was coming into possession.

CHAPTER VI.

HOW WE LIVED AT TWO RIVERS.

TWO RIVERS was really a lovely spot, shaded by trees of all kinds; for Colonel Ratoon had lived in the good old times when brown sugar was eighteenpence a-pound. He was without chick or child, and was free to follow his fancy. As we have seen, he imported marble from the Levant, and so, too, he brought nutmegs from the Moluccas, bread-fruit from Otaheite, betel-palms from Madras—in fact, all kinds of rare shrubs and trees grew thickly about that ridge. Then there were the trees of the country: cocoanut, palm, tamarind, mango, huge plum-trees, Indian figs, hard woods, greenheart, locust, and mahogany. Great creepers; all the passion-flowers, from the huge grenadilla down to the tiniest passiflora. Over head, by day, soared the man-of-war bird, a kind of albatross, and lower down flew wild pigeons and ring-doves. The eaves of the house were lined with humming-birds' nests, much in the same way as our martin builds at home; and

here, too, was the perpetual swallow. If the scene was gay by day, it was more brilliant by night. As soon as the sun fell—and in those islands he literally falls; he does not set or sink; he rushes to his rest in the ocean as though worn out with his hot day's work, and, as Coleridge says:

‘At one step comes the night’—

then the landscape was lit by countless fire-flies, chiefly of two kinds: the lesser winking and twinkling in their light, starting in fitful radiance from every branch; the larger flying straight through the air with a fixed glare—insect meteors—till they rested amid the leaves and veiled their light. To a child who had nothing to think of except objects of sense, *Two Rivers* was an earthly paradise, and I for one am much obliged to Colonel Ratoon for making my father his heir, and so bringing me to *St. Saccharissa*.

The people, too, the slaves, were good people. Grown children, black Irishmen,—call them anything you please that expresses cleverness and carelessness. How should it be otherwise? They were well fed, well clothed, and not over-worked. There was a hospital on the estate, and a doctor who lived in it. A church, too, which Colonel Ratoon had built, and in which the headmen of the estate appeared every Sunday in far better

garb than my father. Black 'pants,' as the Americans call them, and blue coats, and brass buttons, was the correct dress. Even at this distance of time it makes me laugh and melt away, to think how hot our headmen looked sitting up prim in church, as stiff as pokers; while we were all thinly clad in gingham and nankeen. All this came of their pig and their provision-grounds, out of their pork and their yams, and tancias and cassava, which they grew at extra hours, and then sent off by their wives to town to sell. Did they never buy their freedom? Very seldom. Sometimes a Brutus would arise who scorned broadcloth and brass buttons on Sunday, and cherry brandy at Christmas. He would save up his money and buy his freedom at a valuation. What became of him? First of all, he was called a 'Willyforce nigger' by his old friends. In my days there was no worse term of reproach. It meant a drone among hired workers; a good-for-nothing fellow who loafed about the wharves, and only worked for the shipping when hunger drove him. If he had saved enough to do so, besides buying himself he bought another slave. To set him free? By no means. To make him work, and get all he could out of him. Such 'Willyforce niggers' were always the worst masters.

The Dissenters? Oh! I have forgotten them. Well, in our time, they did no harm. It was before emancipation had made them powerful and revolutionary. A Jamaica estate was still worth having. Many of our people were Dissenters, and there was a Baptist chapel down near the works, which was well attended; but it was considered by all the fashionable part of the community the right thing to go to church with massa.

English ideas of slavery are unfortunately taken from Cuba and the United States, where it was the interest of owners to work their slaves to death in order to save the expense of supporting them in old age. But this is to confound the slave-trade with slavery. After the exertions of Clarkson and Wilberforce had been crowned with success, it was the interest of no West Indian proprietor to over-work his slaves; on the contrary, he had everything to gain by taking the greatest care of them. To me, who went constantly among them, they seemed as happy as birds. They were always singing, and their Crop Over Festival was a far more heartfelt rejoicing than so many of our mock Harvest Homes. On those occasions every man, woman, and child that could crawl, walk, or creep, came up to the 'great house,' clad in their best—the men in broadcloth

and brass buttons,—those who could afford it; the rest in drill or pilot cloth. The women in the gayest cotton prints, their heads tastefully tied with Madras handkerchiefs. They marched to an awful music, far exceeding anything that our marrow-bones and cleavers could ever perform. It was a mingling of tom-toms and conches, huge shells which, when properly played by Tritons, may be very melodious, but which, with a negro's breath in them, utter a most unearthly sound. It beats, in fact, any of those German bands which make the squares of the metropolis hideous in the summer months. Those were the male performers; the women had 'shake-shakes,' as they called them, gourds or calabashes, filled with small round red seeds with black eyes. Each of them, like a grain of powder, as Coleridge says of Frenchmen, was contemptible, but five hundred 'shake-shakes' all shaken at once, let me tell you, produced a dry, hoarse sound, something like the crash which Virgil describes as issuing from the Italian hills when the dry boughs and leaves were stirred by the coming storm.

Strange to say that, with all this savage minstrelsy, this confusion of sea, and land, and air, which they called music, they had excellent ears. No one could sing better wild minor strains,

snatches of joy from the heart of Africa ; no one than a negro could improvise a better Fescennine ballad on the peculiarities of an owner, a manager, an overseer, or a governor. Let any one do the wrong thing, and his false step was handed about the island in biting verses, which were sung at their work in the fields by the 'great gang,' the able-bodied part of the people, or over the steaming cane-juice in the boilers, or at night in the negro-houses around the savoury stew.

They had no great crimes. Murders and lesser enormities were so rare as to be almost unknown. They would pilfer from their master, steal his fruit, or the contents of his larder at night, but robbery with violence was never heard of. No ! the great crimes in St. Saccharissa were committed by whites, and generally by soldiers. As when the adjutant of His Majesty's — Regiment was shot by a sentry, much in the same way as soldiers shoot their officers in India now, and the sentry was sentenced to be hanged. The execution created quite a sensation in the island. It was ever so long since a man had been hanged, and the negroes said, 'Hang a white buckra ? Stop a bit ; we shall see !' By which they meant that no white man would ever be hanged, whatever he might do. But the sentry was hanged,

though not without difficulty. If there are no executions in a community there can be no executioner. The honourable profession of Jack Ketch becomes extinct, and dies like a fire for want of fuel. In a word, the man was to be hanged, and there was no one to hang him. Old McCrosky was sheriff, and it seemed as though he would have the task on his own hands. So he set out on a tour of the island to find a negro who would do the deed for a consideration.

Now, at Two Rivers lived, I am sorry to say, the worst character in the whole island. I see him now, tall, and lithe, and strong as a betel-palm. His name was Mercury, and he was well named after the God of Thieves. He had once set fire to a megass-house, that is, a house full of dried canes, after they have passed through the mill, and are then stored up for fuel. Once, too, he had taken another man out to fish with him, and upset the boat and swam on shore. True, when he reached the land, he swam back again and saved the life of his enemy, who was clinging to the boat. When asked why he did it, he only said:

‘Massa, dat only a bit fun; Sambo too plenty coward, so me upset de boat just to make him tink de ground-shark bite him toe off!’

That, therefore, might have been merely a

'freak of graceful folly;' but, somehow or other, the general verdict of the estate was against Mercury. If a fowl was lost, it was laid at Mercury's door. If a heifer fell over the cliff and broke her neck, the watchman, who ought to have looked after her, simply said:

'Ah! massa, dis all dat Mercury work.'

If a pig were choked when tethered by its leg, it was Mercury. In vain he pleaded that the Manakoo, or opossum, had run off with the fowl; or that it was the watchman's fault; or that the pig had throttled himself. It would not do. Public opinion was against Mercury, and the blame was laid on him.

So as Mercury's fame had spread all through the island as a dare-devil, old McCrosky's gig was seen climbing the ridge when the execution was about a week off; and in due time he made his appearance in the marble portico, wiping his face and head, for the sun was hot.

'Good-days' having been exchanged, and sangaree ordered in, McCrosky's errand came out.

'I suppose you know, Mr. Halfacre, that your Mercury is the worst character in the island. I have come to ask you to lend him me for a day.'

'Well!' said my father, 'I hear every one

say so ; but I have been here too short a time to find out his wickedness.'

'You may be sure there's never a bit of roguery done ten miles round that Mercury has not his hand in it. Who but he, I should like to know, stole your lumber last week in the bay?'

'I should very much like to know,' replied my father, 'but I can't see any proof that Mercury stole it. He said most likely it was swept out of the bay by the current, and that it would be found somewhere to leeward.'

'Yes, he has always an excuse ; but will you lend him me for a day?'

'Yes, if he is willing to go ; and if you will tell me what work you mean him to do.'

'Well, the fact is, I am Sheriff ; and Stook the sentry, who shot the adjutant, must be hanged, and I am afraid, unless you lend me Mercury to be executioner, I shall have to hang the fellow myself.'

'I don't like it at all,' said my father ; 'but as I have said Mercury shall go if he is willing. We will send for him and ask him. Meanwhile, send your horse and gig to the stable ; finish your sangaree, and let's have a game of billiards.'

So Mercury was sent for, and, strange to say,

quickly found. Of course it was said that he was only looking about the house to see what he could lay hands on. In any one else such readiness would have been praised as that of a man attending to his work. So great a misfortune is it to have a bad name, that one's very virtues are made out to be vices.

Well, in stalked Mercury into the portico, a perfect model. He might have been done in ebony for a Pantheon where all the gods were sable. One had only to glance at him to see that he was born to be a poacher—to levy black mail. In Africa he would have been a mighty chief; here he was only a fisherman by profession, and a thief by repute.

So there he stood, confronting my father and the Sheriff, nothing doubting that Massa McCrosky was come to bring some charge against him.

'Well, Mercury,' said my father, 'the Sheriff has come—'

'Yes, massa,' broke in Mercury.

'Hear me out, Mercury, the Sheriff has nothing against you. He only wants me to lend you to him to do a day's work; and I have said he shall have you if you are willing to go. He will pay you well?' added my father, interrogatively to the Sheriff.

‘Oh, certainly, certainly,’ said Mr. McCrosky. ‘It shall be worth a guinea to him.’

In those days, I may say, hanging was so cheap in the mother-country that a guinea was thought extra-pay for a West Indian Calcraft.

‘A guinea, massa!’ said Mercury. ‘Dat berry good pay; but what for Massa Crosky pay so high for borrowing dis nigger to work, when last time I see Massa Crosky he say: “Get out o’ de way, you blackguard, who nebber do a day’s work in him life!”’

This blow rather staggered Mr. McCrosky, and so my father went on:

‘Why, you see, Mercury, Mr. McCrosky is Sheriff.’

‘I know dat too well, massa; he often put me in de stocks,’ said Mercury.

‘You see he is Sheriff, and Private Stook is to be hanged; and if the Sheriff can’t get some one to hang him, he must hang him with his own hands; and so he has come to ask me to lend you for the execution, and I have said you may go if you are willing, and if you go you will get a guinea.’

I was but a small boy then, only between six and seven, but crossing the sea had opened my eyes wonderfully, and my mind had grown a good deal on the food it had taken in at the

eyes and ears; for the eyes and ears are the mouths of the mind, and that is why the mind grows so fast, because it has four mouths to feed it. I was but a small boy, but if I lived to be a small boy again, and had any memory left, I should never forget how god-like Mercury grew at this proposition. Not Jove and Juno together could have been more indignant. His chest heaved; he turned almost blue—lobster-blue—with anger; he glared fiercely at the Sheriff, and said:

‘Massa Halfacre, you good massa; leastwise you not here long enough for me to find out you bad. Me know Massa Crosky; some tink him good, some bad; Mercury tink him bad, ’cause he nebber kind to Mercury, and nebber gib him one lilly stampee at Christmas. Me teef, berry true, me teef sometime; me take tongue out of massa’ larder when me hungry. When me catch, say dozen mullet, me sometime say me only catch six. Me drink new rum when I see it. Ebery nigger ’xposed to de wedder drink new rum. It good ’gainst de caught. Dey say me burn down megass house, steal fowl, pig, eberyting. Dey lie; Mercury can’t steal eberyting,—his hand not reach so far. If he steal fowl, what he do wid de fedder; if he steal pig, what for pig make no noise. But me teef; berry

well, me teef; but me no hangman. Massa Sheriff, hab your guinea you self. Hang buckra soldier you self. One buckra hang anodder buckra; berry fine sight. Massa Halfacre gib us all half-holiday to go into Princetown to see de sight.'

And so saying, he strode out of the portico, sat down under a huge tamarind-tree, and began mending a net.

'You see, Sheriff,' said my father, 'it's no use. I could never force one of my people to do such a thing against his will.'

So the Sheriff rode round the island, and could find no one bad enough to be hangman. Nor would he have escaped the dirty work himself, had he not sent a schooner up to Barbadoes, and brought down the greatest ruffian in His Majesty's — Regiment, who for ten shillings and a bottle of rum was willing to lend a hand in hanging Private Stook.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW WE STAYED IN THE WEST INDIES.

I WONDER you have never asked how the vacuum-pans, and cane-crushers, and crystallisers, and engineer, and skilled mechanics succeeded. You had better ask first what they cost. Of course they cost something. Messrs. Nail and Screw were not fond of doing their work for nothing, and I think I may say that this expensive machinery swallowed up, what with first cost, freight, and fitting, more than one year's income from the estate of Two Rivers. The skilled mechanics departed to their own place, perhaps hotter even than the island of Saccharissa, and they went there very quickly under the influence of rum and loose living. The Scotch engineer took his money, and saved it, and went to the Spanish Main, where, I have no doubt, he is still saving money and setting up machinery, if he is alive. But alas! after he and the skilled mechanics had gone their ways, there was no one who understood their handiwork. Of course the old

manager and overseers were dead against the new fangle. Vacuum-pans, and condensers, and crystallisers succeed admirably now-a-days no doubt, because every one understands them ; but it was my father's fate to be the first in the field with Nail and Screw's patents, and the result was a dead failure. It is not always the early bird that gets the worm, and still less the worm of the still. So the vacuum-pans had soon holes burnt in their bottoms, and were got out with infinite trouble and expense, and thrown on one side to rot and rust in the bay. The condensers and steam centrifugal pumps blew up one fine morning, and nearly killed the overseer, and shattered the boiler-house to atoms. And last of all,—ungrateful implement that it was!—the cane-crusher stopped all at once one night, with its maw full of canes, which it refused to masticate. It had got hopelessly jammed and clogged, and would crush nothing but itself. Of course we only wanted a Scotch engineer or a skilled mechanic to set matters right, but, as I have explained, we could not have them. So bit by bit the whole of the new machinery was condemned as worse than useless, and cast aside. I have heard it said that the head boiler—a man, and not a vessel—had climbed up and let a screwdriver fall down among the cogs of the

cane-crusher, and so jammed and clogged it; and I believe it of this benighted boiler, because I have heard of the same thing among our intelligent skilled mechanics at home, who look upon a new machine with just the same eye of aversion as their uneducated black brother did forty years ago in the island of St. Saccharissa. But this waste of money was only the beginning of trouble. One year's income was thrown away on that machinery, as well as all Colonel Ratoon's balance at Short, Ready, and Stump's bank. But after it came what were called measures for the 'Amelioration of the Condition of the Slaves in His Majesty's West Indian Colonies.' Measures which did little to ameliorate the condition of the slave, but everything to deteriorate the position of the planter. What with reduced hours of labour, and the care of old, young, and sick; what with churches, and doctors, and protectors of slaves—a sort of moral exciseman, always poking his nose in where he was not wanted, and expecting sangaree at luncheon, and to be asked to stay to dinner, and take a bed—I say, what with all this, the margin of profit on producing sugar grew less and less. But worse remained. Other countries became sugar-growing and sugar-competing for the sweet tooth of the world; Mauritius, Java, and the East

Indies. With unlimited labour in India, for instance, West India sugar was undersold; and though the planters of St. Saccharissa and the other islands swore that what came from the East Indies as sugar was not sugar at all; just as a late lamented Master of Trinity laid it down that bitter beer was not beer; somehow or other, the world thought it sugar, just as they are stupid enough to think bitter beer beer. They sweetened their tea with it, sugared Twelfth Cakes with it, used the sham and the reality with equal impartiality, according as one was cheaper than the other, and the result was that clayed Muscovados fell about one third in price.

But this fall had another result. You remember that notice of Claw, Tooth, and Nail, that when they came 'under advances' their commission rose to twenty per cent each way. Few incomes or estates can stand forty per cent deduction. Yet this was what happened to Two Rivers. Claw, Tooth, and Nail did 'come under advances' in the second year of my father's ownership, and they charged forty per cent; for, though they would have repudiated the notion of being usurers, and Mr. Claw would have scouted the notion, that was what their commission came to at the end of the year. They received all my father's sugar and rum and sold it at twenty per

cent commission, and they sent him out all manner of things which he wanted and did not want for working the estate. They even gave Nail and Screw another large order for machinery, which arrived in due course, and which was sent up to Two Rivers in a coasting vessel at infinite expense, and landed at the risk of many lives through a tumbling surf, and was never put up, but lay rotting and rusting because it was before its age, and St. Saccharissa produced no skilled mechanics. From advances they got to a mortgage, the interest and compound interest on which soon swallowed up the little profit that remained after the Orders in Council and the Equalisation of the Sugar Duties; and so there was my poor father in the West Indies, with the Two Rivers Estate like a millstone round his neck, still trying to work it, for he was loth to abandon it, and each year getting deeper and deeper into the spider web of Claw, Tooth, and Nail.

You will understand now how lucky it was that my father did not tie himself to a day as to his return, and that my mother went with him. You will remember, too, how time slips away, even to the owner of a mortgaged estate; and how it was that one fine day Aunt Mandeville wrote a letter, spitting fire and flame even after being cooled on its way across the

Atlantic, to remind my parents that I was now nine years old, and asking why the promise given that I should belong to her at eight had not been fulfilled.

I do not mean you to think that was the only letter she wrote. She often wrote, and we often wrote to her. Like a sensible woman she was always urging my father to throw the whole thing up, and return to Halfacre Hall, and end his days under his Warwickshire oaks among the green rolling fields. Sometimes she sent him the Meets of Hounds to make him long for home, and he sighed, when we were broiling, to think that the meets were—Monday, Halfacre Gorse; Wednesday, Brinklow Tumulus; Friday, Stoneleigh Park. But, like many others, my father did not know when to make a loss. Hard is it to know when to take a gain, but harder still to make up your mind not to continue any longer throwing good money after bad.

As for me, it was felt that the fatal day had arrived; if I was to belong to Aunt Mandeville home I must go. In fact, we ought all to have gone home: my mother was willing, but my father would not. My mother's heart yearned for her other children; but when she spoke of them my father would talk of having my eldest brother out, before he went to Cambridge, that he

might see the world. How much of the world he was likely to see on the Atlantic, or in St. Saccharissa, I decline to say.

But as for me, home I must go ; there was no blinking the question. It seemed to be now or never. Of course I was sorry to part with them ; how can you ask such an unfeeling question ? Every well-behaved child is sorry to leave its father and mother—most of all its mother. But the mind of man is full of mixed motives ; there is dross in the purest gold of our nature. Every child likes change ; and so, when the first shock was over, I was soon reconciled to the separation.

CHAPTER VIII.

HOW I WENT HOME IN THE 'DELAFFORD.'

I WELL remember how my father drove me in from his estate in a phaeton; how my mother sobbed and sighed; how we got to the beautiful horseshoe bay, and how I stood there, a sallow urchin in nankeens, under the burning sun, till the ship's boat came for me; how the good old captain took me by the hand; how I still clung to my dear kind father by the other; how he patted me on the head, and bade me behave like a man; how I thought I would rather be a boy, and stay there; how I was coaxed into the boat by the bait of a banana; how they shoved her off—the cheery, brawny sailors; how her keel grated on the yellow sand; how she shot off into deep water; how the sailors rowed lustily; how she lifted to the swell; how the sharks rose round us, and their greedy eyes looked as if they would so like a little boy; how we reached the black-sided sugar-ship; how I was handed and hauled up the ladder; how I turned on deck and

saw my father still standing on the beach, his black groom, so full of jokes and jests, holding the horses' heads until he turned slowly, got into the phaeton, and drove off. Then, for the first time in my life, I really felt alone. Down the companion I went, to look at the box called a berth. Below it was stuffy and sweltering; the air was full of bilge-water, sugar, steam, and rum. Out of the cuddy grinned a mulatto steward. There too was the first mate, and there too was my luggage, boxes tenderly packed and filled by a mother's hand. Alas! it was Black Monday for seven long weeks. We put to sea, we shot by isle after isle, flat, like Barbadoes, and tall, like Grenada, rising with her green mountain-coronet from the blue sea. What cared I then for such things? I was a boy. I got sweetmeats at Barbadoes and oranges at Grenada. Then the wind rose, and the sea grew rough, and so it lasted for a week or more. I kept my berth. Cockroaches crawled over me; by night they gnawed my lips; the yellow steward came to me with his loathsome dishes; he brought me his tea, which was no tea to me without milk. What had become of that pet cow which my father had put on board to give me milk? Had it gone mad, like Io, and jumped into the sea, or had it climbed into the maintop? Wherever it was, it gave no milk. It

was sea-sick like myself, and pined for its calf as I did for my mother. Time after time the good old captain came to me and bade me take heart; I should soon be better and able to eat. They were going to kill one of our pigs. Did I not know it? Had I not from early dawn heard the victim bewailing his hard fate, that he, a pig of high degree—his father was a Spanish boar, and his mother a Neapolitan sow, — should perish ignobly on that stormy ocean, and find a tomb in sailors' entrails! As he shrieked and squealed all his fellow-pigs joined in the concert, and the cocks crew, and the hens chuckled from their coops, and the sheep baaed, and my cow, the milkless one, lowed in harmony. At last the martyr met his death amid awful squeals. All this I heard as I lay restless in bed, and wondered what a bad thing school must be to make me so miserable. Like a youthful Hezekiah, I turned my face to the wall, and refused comfort. At last I rose and went on deck, and then my appetite returned; for about three weeks I devoured greedily everything the cook, who I hope is now safe in Hecklebirnie's House, served up. He slew sheep, and geese, and turkeys, and chickens, and pigs, and served them up raw. Once, when it was very rough, he wanted us to do without cooking altogether, and took to his

bed. He was ill, and could not cook. This led to an interview with the boatswain, a man of few words and many blows, whose cane brought the cook out of bed. Amongst other things I had a turtle on board, quite a lively one. The captain had one too, which was unlively. Here I may remark that there are Fairies and Good People on boardship as elsewhere, and this is a proof of it. This lively turtle was meant as a present from my father to Aunt Mandeville. I have always liked turtles, they are so sympathising, and they open their eyes so tenderly, and their lips smile so softly, as they rise in their tubs and gasp for more fat. They have been my passion from infancy. I love them in season and out of season, at all hours, in soup, in upper and under shell; I love calipash and calipee, turtle-steaks and turtle-fins. In short, I adore the whole turtle, and every part of him. Every morning, then, as soon as I was up and washed, I walked off to see the turtle, and the cook generally looked at him too. Fancy my wonder one morning when I saw that my turtle had grown much smaller and thinner in the night. He looked as much like my turtle of the day before as a changeling elf resembles the comely child whose place he fills. He seemed too as if he were near his last gasp, so close were his puffs and pants. Over him stood the cook, knife

in hand. What are you going to do to my turtle? 'Kill him to save his life; he'll die if I don't.' So killed he was, and we ate him; and a very nasty mess the cook made of him—all shell and skin, no fat. After we had eaten him, I said to the mate, 'That looked very like the captain's turtle, only he was in my turtle's tub; do you think they changed tubs in the night?' 'No! no!' said the mate. 'It was your turtle that was going to die, and it was your turtle that we ate; the captain's turtle never dies.'

So the voyage went on, and as one voyage is very much like another, I shall cut this short. Our voyage home was very like our voyage out, except that I was older, and had no companions. I remember we met a whale,—a true whale. Or rather, I am wrong; he overtook us. We were going free, with a fine breeze, and yet the huge monster passed us without the least apparent effort. He must have been going twenty knots at least through the water, and yet he seemed to be swimming quite within himself. He passed close alongside, baring only a part of his large body at a time. I recollect thinking it was very lucky for us that he did not take it into his head to run his nose against us, and send us to the bottom.

The weather was pretty good until we got to the chops of the Channel. There we had baffling

winds for a week. As the sea is always rough in the Gulf of Lyons, so I am convinced the wind is always foul in the chops of the Channel. It has been so whenever I have been there.

At last we got into soundings. We could touch English earth by the lead. That they call the deep sea or 'dipsey' lead. How many hundred fathoms our 'dipsey' lead took down with it before it reached the bottom, I am sure I forget; but it was a grand sight to see the lead cast. What a splash it made as it went down beneath the waves, and what toil and trouble it was to get it up!

When it came up I was standing at the mate's elbow. 'Here, Teddy,' he cried, 'taste a bit of Old England;' and as he said so he rubbed the patch of tallow, with the sand and small shells sticking to it at the end of the lead, against my nose. What with the nasty tallow, the filthiest of all smells in my opinion, and the rough sand and shells, my first taste and smell of Old England were not at all nice. But we were in soundings somewhere between Scilly and the Land's End, and we should soon sight the land and run up Channel.

Next day we sighted the land. I think it was the Lizard we saw. How unlike the dear green lizards at Two Rivers? Next we got

a fair wind and ran rapidly past Cornwall, Devon, and Dorset. Then we stood out, keeping the lead going constantly, till we were off the Isle of Wight. Next day we were off Dover, and the pilot came on board.

Though it is so long ago, I remember the face of that man as though I had only seen him yesterday. I remember his hale, ruddy face, his clear, grey eyes, his huge mottled hands, his awkward gait, as he crawled up the side from his pilot-boat, which had rounded to under our lee, and lay dancing up and down below our chains. He seemed half man and half seal or walrus. His air of command was astonishing. Our good old captain became as nothing before Mr. Smart, Trinity Pilot, who now took charge of the ship. I believe a captain can't interfere until a pilot has *delirium tremens*. If he sees him running his vessel on shore he can't stop him. He may mistake Dungeness for the North Foreland; that's only an error of judgment. It is no concern of the captain. Let the ship strike, and the underwriters suffer! That is the doctrine of pilotage carried out to its extremest consequences; but our pilot was an old friend of the captain's, and had been on the look-out for him. Have I never told you the name of our ship? It was the *Delaford*, and a very good ship she was, and the captain was a most de-

lightful specimen of the true British sailor. There are few such captains now-a-days. He might have stood to old Fuller for his model of 'The Good Sea-Captain.' Well, he is gone, and so is the good ship gone, and, I dare say, most of the brave hearts in her—all except myself.

Let us gulp down such thoughts, and get on. The captain asked the pilot if there was any news,—if anything had happened lately.

'Nothing,' said the pilot, 'except that Lord Castlereagh has been and cut his throat.'

'Do you call that nothing?' said the captain. 'I call it great news.'

'He warn't Master of the Trinity House, nor he warn't Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, nor he warn't Fust Lord of the Admiralty,' said the pilot. 'If one of them had died I should have called it news. They're seafaring folk; but this Lord was a landlubber for what I know. Luff,' he called out in a voice like the north wind blowing round the Pole, to the man at the wheel, 'you'll be aboard of that Frenchman if you don't look out.'

Besides the news of which he thought so little, he brought us 'fresh bread and butter.' 'You don't think that much? Ah! that's because you've never been in the West Indies, where they know next to nothing of bread, and as for butter, fresh

butter, it's a thing unknown.' It was early morning, a morning in May—quite at the end of May—but it was bitterly cold, and I remember that butter was as hard as a stone, whereas all the butter I remembered to have seen before was in a liquid state, as near oil as butter can be without ceasing to be butter and turning into oil. No! bread and butter, in our English sense of fresh bread and butter, was unknown in St. Saccharissa, and I made the most of it when I made its acquaintance on board the *Delaford*.

I forgot to say that the pilot's cutter went away a few minutes after he had boarded us, but not before one of his 'mates,' as he called him, had clambered on board and paid us a visit. Never did I see—never shall I see pockets such as that 'mate' had in his coat. Into them he stowed away three quart bottles of rum which the captain gave him—I suppose to keep him in spirits till the pilot rejoined him. As soon as he had stowed them safely away, he said, 'Good-bye, Bill,' to Mr. Smart, crawled back again, cast off the cutter, in which there were still three hands besides himself, and was gone.

Under the guidance of the pilot we ran past Dover and through the Downs. We passed quite close to the Goodwins, and I saw them stretching for miles of hard, yellow sand. At night we

were off the Nore, and as the tide failed and the wind was now contrary, we cast anchor. Why didn't we have a steam-tug? Bless your innocent hearts! in those days there were no steam-tugs. The homeward bound and the outward bound had to make their way up and down the Thames by tide and wind alone.

We anchored, therefore, that night; and next morning the good old captain, whose authority over his ship was, as we have seen, suspended, left her, and hailing one of the small Ramsgate steamers, which were then quite a novelty, we got on board her, and so went merrily up to town. There my father had begged the captain to hand me over to the care of Claw, Tooth, and Nail, until I could go down to Mandeville Hall.

CHAPTER IX.

HOW I WENT TO MY AUNT MANDEVILLE.

As soon as I landed, the good old captain announced the fact to Claw, Tooth, and Nail, and it was settled that I should stay with old Tooth, who still lived in Bryanston Square, till his firm had notified the fact of my arrival to my Aunt, and she had signified her pleasure to receive me. I was just ten years old, and not more sallow than little boys who come from the West Indies usually are. Old Tooth was always in the City; the older he got, Mrs. Tooth said, the closer he stuck to business. She believed, indeed, he would end by going back to Vulture Court and living there altogether. So I saw little of old Tooth, but Mrs. Tooth was very kind to me. She bought me a bow and arrow, and I shot the Square gardener in the calf. Mrs. Tooth gave him half-a-crown and begged him to be sure and say nothing about the arrow to her husband. She took me to see the beasts in the Tower. It was just after Chuny's execution—if any one now

remembers Old Exeter Change and Chuny, the elephant—but he was then the talk of the town. One night Nail took me to Vauxhall, and I had supper, and saw the fireworks—at least, I ought to have done so, but I fell asleep before they were let off; and much to his dismay, the exquisite Mr. Nail had to drag me to a hackney-coach, one of the old Jarveys, and carry me back to Bryanston Square. Next morning came a letter, in due course of post, from my Aunt to Claw, Tooth, and Nail, begging them to send me down by the Highflyer to Warwick, and there she would meet me and take me over to Mandeville Hall. Accordingly next morning, at seven o'clock, I started from the Bath Hotel in Piccadilly on the Highflyer. I was perched just behind the coachman, and for ten weary hours, as it seemed to me, we went along the London and Holyhead road towards Warwick. Not that I fancy that Telford's Road went through Warwick, but the Highflyer followed the road to Dunchurch, and then turned off towards Warwick.

I remember, when I first arrived in England, thinking that the sun never shone, that the rain seemed to fall in mere dribblets, that the trees were very short and stumpy, and that the crops were very poor. I was not, therefore, much struck with my drive to Warwick, though now I

think Warwickshire one of the prettiest and richest counties in England.

Perhaps I might have enjoyed the journey more had it not been for the meeting with my Aunt Mandeville, which was at the other end of it. I cannot say that my spirits rose when about 5 P.M. on that June day, the coachman turned round and said, in a quarter of an hour we should be in Warwick. I felt very much as though I wished the journey were just beginning instead of coming to its end. But hopes or fears, wishes or regrets, all were vain, here we were in Warwick, and the Highflyer rattled over the stones, the guard blowing his horn, the children flying from the middle of the street, and the maid-servants running to the windows, just to see what they had seen every day of their lives about the same hour. All at once we halted. The leaders were pulled round and we drove under an archway into the court of the 'Dun Cow,' at which famous hostelry the coach stopped to tea, and I was to alight.

A waiter, then as now, in black with a white neckcloth—why are waiters and undertakers the only specimens of humanity that never change?—came out, looked up at the coach whence I was crawling down in fear and trembling, and before I reached the ground, asked, was I the

young gentleman for whom Mrs. Mandeville was waiting.

‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘I am Master Halfacre, and Mrs. Mandeville is my Aunt.’

‘This way, sir,—yes sir. Mrs. Mandeville is in the Blue Room.’

Into the Blue Room then I was ushered, and there rising from the inevitable black horsehair sofa was a stately lady, whose remembrance, strange to say, had not entirely faded from my mind.

She had been very handsome, and still showed it. The first and last thing that you saw about Aunt Mandeville were her large bright brown eyes. For the rest, she had regular features, a slightly aquiline nose, chestnut hair, in which there were no grey hairs, and a tall, slight figure. Altogether she was graceful and dignified; but when you had scanned her all over you had to return to her eyes, and to feel, as they looked at you and through you, that it would be hard to keep a secret from her.

‘Well, Edward,’ she said slowly, but gazing hard at me; ‘they have sent you at last? I have waited a long time for you, and thought you were never coming.’

It was necessary to say something, but what I scarce knew; so I answered at haphazard:

‘I came, Aunt, as soon as they sent me; and along with me, papa sent you a turtle, but it died.’

Whether Aunt Mandeville still remembered the fatal turtle of which my father partook when first snared by Claw, Tooth, and Nail, I cannot say, but she gave a little start, and said quietly:

‘I hope I shall be fonder of you than of the turtle, Edward. I hope to care a great deal for you, and I care very little for the turtle.’

‘I hope you will, Aunt.’

‘But will you be a good boy to me? Your mother writes you are a very good boy.’

‘I’ll try, Aunt.’

‘Try, then; and now give me a kiss, and let us go away to Mandeville Hall.’

Saying this she rang the bell; the musty waiter appeared; the carriage was ordered; and in a few minutes it stood in front of the ‘Dun Cow.’ We got into it, and slowly rolled behind two sleek, grey horses over the uneven Warwick stones.

Mandeville Hall was five miles from Warwick, and we took some time to reach it. Meanwhile, my Aunt said little, but leant back in the open carriage, lost in thought, while I looked at the green fields and haymakers as we rolled

lazily along. In about half an hour, or more, we turned off from the highroad at a lodge; then through a park studded with clumps of tall elms and free-standing oaks; then up a slope, and through an avenue of feathering limes, at the end of which we swept round in front of an old Elizabethan house. Out came a bald-headed butler and two footmen. We alighted from the carriage; my Aunt went first; and as we passed up some steps and reached the threshold of the hall she turned round, looked me full in the face with her large, piercing eyes, and said in a low, soft voice :

‘ Welcome, Edward, to Mandeville Hall.’

Mandeville Hall was rather a Tudor than an Elizabethan house. It had a moat half round it. An Irishman would have said that it had a moat all round it in front. I suppose it had once gone round the house, but had been filled up at the back and sides. There was a large hall in the centre, with a staircase leading to each wing, and these wings extended to more than the length of the hall on each side, so that they enclosed a court at the back. Now I remember more exactly, the house was built on the site of an older embattled house, which had left it the moat as a legacy; and there was an inscription over the portal which told how ‘This hovse was bvilded

by Sir Geoffrey Mandeville, Verderer of the Forest of Arden, in the time of King Henry the 7th.' Inside the hall was hung with escutcheons and banners, and decorated with family waifs and strays. Here hung the banner which an older Sir Geoffrey had borne at Cressy; here the helmet of Sir Giles, who fought at Agincourt; here the sword of Sir Hugh, with which he would have cloven the Roundheads at Marston Moor, whither he had led a whole troop of Woodmen of Arden, only, unfortunately, one of Cromwell's Ironsides split his head instead, and his good sword was all that was saved to the family out of the wreck of that day. In a glass case was another great curiosity—a mere antiquarian object now, but a perilous possession a century before. It was one of those transparent cups which in certain lights show the lively likeness of the old Pretender, so that the Jacobite owner, as he held it up and drained it to the health of the king, might pledge him whom he considered the lawful sovereign, though he seemed to be drinking the health of George I.

Let me not forget to mention the prudence of the Mandeville of that time. He was of a Jacobite stock, and got together and secretly armed his retainers, meaning to join Charles Edward on his march to London. This he did

when he heard the Scots were coming south ; and when the news came that they were nearly at Derby the Squire Mandeville set off with his men. Fortunately for him the Scots turned tail at Derby ; but he was wise in his generation. Did he turn tail too ? In that case he might have been hanged, drawn, and quartered as a rebel. No ! he marched on, and told the first colonel of one of King George's regiments that he met, how he had got together this force to resist the rebels, and now placed it entirely at His Majesty's disposal. So he saved his estates.

All these things I came to know afterwards bit by bit from my Aunt, who was as good as any showman or showwoman. But whenever she told me anything of the Mandevilles which raised my wonder at their antiquity, she used to say :

' Child ! they are mere upstarts compared with the Halfacres, who were Danes, settled at Half-acre long before Godiva rode through the streets of Coventry ; and your father has, or ought to have, a charter by which Alfred granted these lands in Mercia to one Harfager, a Norseman in Guthrum's following, free from every due and tax except " the triple necessity." '

I very much doubt that my Aunt, like many a showman, did not know what she was talking

about ; I am sure I didn't, but of course I now know, and you know, too, that this triple necessity,—the *trinoda necessitas* of the charters, was, first, the building of bridges and castles ; second, the repairing of roads ; and third, the following the king to war when an enemy invaded the land.

If you care to know this, thank me ; if not, I care little for your thanks.

One staircase, at one end of the hall, on the right as you entered it, led to the bed-rooms occupied by the family. There were rooms of all colours and denominations, the Blue, Red, Green, and Chintz Rooms, and their dressing-rooms, as there are in every decent house. Then there was the Long Room, and the Square Room, and the Octagon Room in a turret ; and the Halfacre Room, the bed-room of our family, and I don't know how many other rooms besides. Underneath these bed-rooms were the offices on the ground-floor, the whole length of that wing. On the other side of the Hall, on the ground-floor, were the Dining-room, and my Aunt's room, and two Drawing-rooms, and a Library, filled with rare old books. Beyond the Library, at the very end of that wing, was the Chapel, a late Perpendicular building. The staircase on the left, at that end of the Hall, led to the

State rooms, which, in furniture and fitting, seemed very much as they had originally been. There was King Henry the Seventh's room, in which he stayed one night, and the morning after fined Sir Geoffrey a thousand marks for sinning against the statute of retainers. From Mandeville Hall, it is said, Cardinal Morton dated his celebrated 'Fork,' or Dilemma, addressed to those who remonstrated against the forced loans called 'Benevolences.' Those who lived expensively, it was plain, could afford the 'Benevolence,' because they had money to spend, and those who lived economically could also afford to pay, because they must have saved money; the end being that all had to pay. Then there was King Harry's room, with bed-furniture all embroidered with double-seeded roses; and there were presses, and chairs, and tables, carved with true Tudor strap ornaments. Here Henry VIII. had come with Catherine Howard, the guiltiest and prettiest of his wives; and the monograms H.R. and C.R. were perpetually intertwined on the plaster ceiling.

Then there was Queen Elizabeth's room, in which she once slept a week when she had taken it into her head to visit Mary Queen of Scots at Fotheringay, and changed her mind hereabouts, and stayed here trying to make it up, while the

Mandeville of the day,—Sir Hugh, I fancy, was his name,—was ruining himself in masks and interludes and gatherings of the Woodmen; he, too, was Verderer of the Forest. And there was shooting at the Butts, it may be at Meriden, where the ghosts of the old Woodmen meet once a-year; and there was dancing on the green, and shafts clapped in the clout at six hundred yards, which few Woodmen can do in these degenerate days. In return the Queen left behind her a sampler which she had worked, with ‘Feare Godde and honour ye Queene’ in the centre, and a wreath of gilly-flowers round it; all within a border of E R. E R. There was a sort of commonplace book of hers, too, very like a child’s copy-book, only the writing was much better and stronger than that of our children, crammed with choice sentences culled from Colet’s grammar, as ‘Sero nunquam est ad bonos mores via;’ ‘Scire tuum nihil est nisi te scire hoc sciat alter;’ ‘Deterior est quotidie posterior dies.’ Here was her sampler and commonplace book, but where was the Queen and the Mandeville of that day, and the Woodmen of Arden? Off this Elizabeth room was a dressing-room, and a very strange room it was. There was no door in it, except that which led from the bed-room, and it had one long window in it half walled up. There were also Prince Henry’s

room and Queen Anne's room, and I don't know how many more ; quite as many as there were on the opposite side of the court and I remember that, in wet weather, I used to run up and down the gallery which led down one side of our wing, and count the windows in the gallery across the court.

The Hall, as I have said, was surrounded by a fine park. There were beautiful flower-gardens and trim yew-walks and bowers, a kitchen-garden, and a *plaisance* with a terrace overhanging a continuation of the moat, which was fed by a spring under the house, and all along the old wall grew wall-flowers, and stone-crops, and rockets, and snap-dragons, and all the old flowers which gardeners now look upon as so many weeds.

CHAPTER X.

AUNT MANDEVILLE AT HOME.

THIS must suffice for a description of Mandeville Hall, in which my Aunt lived all alone. If I could have reflected, I might have thought that she had been living all that time waiting for me. I recollect when I went to bed that night in the Octagon Room, two rooms off my Aunt's, that I said to myself:

'Nurse was very wrong to call Auntie "a rampaging cow," for she seems kindness itself.'

And she really had been kind. She let me dine with her, and talked every now and then gently to me; not too fast or too often, for she saw that I was tired; and yet, somehow, she had got from me all she wished to know about my father and mother, and St. Saccharissa, and the voyage, and the *Delaford*, and old Tooth, and 'young' Mr. Nail, as he was still called.

After dessert she said: 'Now, child, I think you had better go to bed; if you have any tea, it will keep you awake.'

To hear my Aunt Mandeville was to obey her,—at least, for a child; so I got up, and was going to shake hands with her, being still shy.

‘No hand-shaking, Edward,’ she said, ‘not till I cease to love you. Till then give me a kiss.’

So I kissed Auntie, and went off to bed.

If you are a woman who is reading this, you will be dying to ask how old Aunt Mandeville was. Well, *I* then thought her very old, like the nursemaid who, when asked her age at the census, said: ‘I’m fifteen, sir; but no one can tell how old cook is!’ the said cook being described by another fellow-servant as an ‘aged woman’ of thirty-five. But what I thought, a child of ten, was not much to the purpose. I never exactly knew how old Aunt Mandeville was, but I fancy she was still under forty when I came to her. Under forty, but not far from it. ‘Small change out of forty,’ as one of the unearnest rising generation would say.

Now, to very young ladies of eighteen, forty seems a fabulous antiquity; but, perhaps, the same young lady, when she has been married—which is the surest of all female cosmetics,—and though it sometimes spoils the shape, often makes a face beautiful for ever,—the same young lady, I say, a widow of thirty-seven may find that she

has a beauty of her own; that all ages have their beauty, and that she may even be forty and still very attractive.

But enough of my Aunt; she lived very much alone, went out little, read a good deal, and seemed very glad to have me with her. I have already told you that she was afraid of Dr. Mindererus; but there was some one else who tyrannised over her, though she scarcely knew it. Every one else saw it, and yet she shut her eyes. This tyrant was that bald-headed butler, Brooks, of whom I spoke before. I have often, as I grew in wit, and of course in wisdom, lain awake o' nights and wondered how it was that Brooks, who, besides being bald-headed, was a pot-bellied, scrubby-bearded dolt, had my Aunt so completely in his power as to her movements. If any one stayed in the house, and talked Tory politics, this offensive fellow would not scruple to say, leaning gently over their chair at dinner, and seeming to help them to champagne,—‘Mrs. Mandeville’s politics are Whig, sir; you had better talk of the weather.’ Or if the Church were started, or there was a question of Irish Emancipation—I mean the emancipation of the Romanists in Ireland forty years ago; not the destruction of the Irish Protestant Church—and any one praised the measure, this wretch would whisper in the

same way: 'Mrs. Mandeville is a strict Orangewoman,' by which he did not mean that she was a Nell Gwyn of the nineteenth century, but that she was against the Church policy of the late Sir Robert Peel. The end of it was that there was no conversation, when any one dined at Mandeville Hall, except about gardening, the weather, the Dorcas Society, the village choir, and the cholera, which was then rapidly approaching these shores for the first time. None of these were very lively subjects, and the last was a most dismal one. I recollect one dessert in particular, in the August of 182-, when a most magnificent dish of peaches smiled on the board. Before I made my appearance at dessert, the scoundrel Brooks, the heartless hypocrite, had artfully led the conversation to cholera by one of his whispers, and when I came in I found a party of undertakers, so gloomy did they all appear.

'They say it is very painful,' said my Aunt.

'Dreadfully so,' said Dr. Mindererus. 'Patients become quite blue and pulseless, and die in six hours.'

'I read to-day in *The Times*, just before I dressed for dinner,' said Colonel Stock, then in command of the 10th Queen's, at Coventry, 'that it had reached Posen.'

'Where's Posen, Edward?' said my Aunt.

‘In Poland, Aunt. But what’s in Poland? Mayn’t I have a peach?’

‘No! no! my little friend,’ said the fiendish Mindererus. ‘At these seasons of epidemic, malaria, and universal contagion, peaches are absolutely forbidden, except to the faculty, who know and always carry about with them antidotes against the malign influence.’

Having uttered which oracular words, he bowed to my Aunt, and helped himself to the finest peach in the dish.

‘Mayn’t I have some of Dr. Mindererus’ antidote, Auntie? Ask him to carry some for me too, next time he comes, if he hasn’t got enough for me now.’

At this there was a laugh, even under the ribs of the undertakers, and the colonel bowed to the doctor, and said:

‘Had you there I think, doctor.’

As for me, I could not join in the laughter I had caused, for Brooks seized the diversion to take me by the collar and nearly choke me, saying in a soft voice, as I turned sharply round:

‘Beg pardon, Master Edward, if I hurt you; but your shirt-collar is all awry, and I tried to put it straight.’

‘No, Edward, no peaches to-day. You hear what the doctor says.’ And so that magnificent

dish went off minus one, and no doubt was duly discussed and devoured by Brooks and the upper servants.

So, too, about going out in the carriage. Here Brooks and Ribbons the coachman ran in double harness. If the day was cloudy, rain was sure to fall. If it was fine, it might turn to rain. If it was a rainy morning, it would certainly not clear in the afternoon. Over the orders for the coachman, in short, there was always a pitched battle. 'Any orders for the coachman?' asked Brooks; and then, in the same breath:

'Mr. Ribbons do say, ma'am, that the grey mare have strained her back-sinew.'

'Very well, Brooks; then I'll have the pony-chaise.'

Brooks would then retire, but only to return in a moment.

'Mr. Ribbons says, ma'am, that the bay pony threw a shoe yesterday, and the blacksmith hasn't shod her yet.'

By these devices, added to the days when Mr. Ribbons felt out of sorts, after a night with Mr. Brooks, it rarely happened that my Aunt had her carriage out more than once a-week. And what proved that these deceivers were in league against her, was the fact that the horses were always well when my Aunt went out to dinner.

Then the worthy couple knew that she must go, as she had accepted an invitation, and so they were foiled; but in anything that depended on her own fancy or will alone, they invariably tried to thwart her by some pretext.

Yes! great is the power of man, even a dolt, over a woman in domestic trifles; greater still is the power of men-servants over their mistresses in servants' matters. In all the real business of life Aunt Mandeville was equal to any two men I have ever known, but at home she was a slave to her servants. Her maid would never allow her to wear the clothes she liked. She used to say that she never knew what dress she would bring her in the morning, or how she meant to dress her for dinner. So there she was, when I first knew her, tyrannised over by butler, coachman, and maid, a triple necessity, quite as severe and inexorable as any which bound the old Half-acres; and though the proverb which says that all good things are three, has its converse in all bad things are three, these three bad things under which my Aunt laboured were made worse by a fourth, in the shape of an old housekeeper, who did next to nothing but feed the parrot in her room on the basement.

However, all these things which I found out afterwards, did not much concern a boy in his

eleventh year. Of course I had to go to school, but fortunately I arrived at the middle of June, and towards the end of the half, at Dr. Cutbrush's school at Potterbridge, where one of my brothers had been, and where it was settled I was to go. So between June and the middle of September I ran wild about Mandeville Park, and was as happy as any boy could be. My Aunt was very good to me, and we became great friends. I soon found out that she was of a jealous nature, as though her natural feelings had been repressed, and were now finding vent. With my Aunt Mandeville it was all or nothing, and that was the reason why she had so few friends. She was too exacting. But in the nineteenth century, the age of jealous gods is past and gone. We worship many divinities, and expect to find favour with all. This is idolatry, you say ; well, so it is ; Pantheism, so it is ; Atheism, so it is ; that is to say, if you think the adoration of many denies the worship of one. But you are drawing me into a trap, reader ; I am telling you my Aunt Mandeville's character, and you are trying to ferret out my beliefs. I throw myself back, therefore, on the great principle, thought is free, and carry it out by declining to let you prove me socratically a freethinker.

When I was older I learnt better to know

what my Aunt's jealousy meant, but for a child it is an easy and a reasonable service to worship a woman who is kind to you. There are so many tender things that a woman can do for a child which no man would ever think of doing however much he loved a child. It is part of the brutality and stupidity of the stronger nature of the lords of the creation—of that hard, rough will which has trodden under foot so many flowers of feeling, and, therefore, nipped even in the bud so much moral fruit, to stand before a being which it loves, a child or a wife, meaning to love it and be kind to it, and yet to be utterly helpless to express its feeling, and even to seem heartless and repulsive.

But it was not so with me and my Aunt. She made herself all in all to me, she sang to me and danced with me. If she ever became like that rampaging animal to which nurse falsely likened her, it was when she scampered across the grass after my ball, or was fagging out for me at cricket, while Brooks, the bald-headed tyrant, stood longstop. Who bowled? Why, Ribbons, the coachman, of course; and many a long run old Brooks had after the byes. Indeed, I don't think he ever stopped a ball once, except by accident.

At that time I think there was nothing that Auntie would not have done for me, even to climbing a tree to take a wood-pigeon's nest.

No wonder then that my grief at parting from my parents was soon assuaged. Oh! blessed, glorious boyhood, that cries its eyes out, and then wipes them in again brighter than ever.

But time will roll on, and so July passed, and August came and stole away, though he seemed scarce able to stir a step for heat, and then September came, and we had partridges, and I wanted my Aunt to let me go out shooting, and to go with me herself; and I verily believe she would have done it, had not Brooks again interfered, by saying he did not know what the country would think if they heard that Mrs. Mandeville had gone out shooting with Master Edward.

And September went away very fast. He could stir his feet nimbly enough. The 10th, the 12th, the 15th, the 20th, till it was only two days to the 23rd, the awful day on which the 'young friends' of Dr. Cutbrush were to re-assemble.

CHAPTER XI.

HOW I WENT TO DR. CUTBRUSH.

THE morning of the 22nd came. Now-a-days I should have got into a train about mid-day at Warwick, have reached Euston Square in two or three hours, have taken a cab to King's Cross, and gone by the Great Northern to Potterbridge, which I can only tell you was somewhere down the Great Northern line. I should thus have arrived between four and five at the abode of the doctor. But in 182— it was quite otherwise. Up at six at Mandeville Hall, drive to Warwick, catch the coach *Highflyer* or *Tallyho* at the 'Dun Cow' at eight; ten hours to London, reaching the Bath Hotel, Piccadilly, between six and seven. It was therefore necessary that I should sleep a night in town, as no one ever heard of a new boy coming to his school at night. My Aunt hated Claw, Tooth, and Nail from the bottom of her heart. She loved her brother, though she despised him because he was not 'man enough,' as she expressed it, for 'the old

Halfacre blood;’ and she hated the firm that had inveigled him out to the West Indies, and there kept him fast bound in misery and iron. But she had to do the hardest thing on earth,—ask a favour from those whom you detest and despise. She had to sit down and write to Mrs. Tooth, and beg her to give me a bed. In her imperious way, if my father had been free from entanglements, she would have written like Elizabeth:—‘Messrs. Claw, Tooth, and Nail. Take notice, failing at your peril, that it is my intention to send my nephew, Edward Halfacre, to you, or one of you, for one night. For whose safe keeping this shall be your warrant:

Teste meipsâ
apud Mandevillam.

ELEANOR.’

All this time you have never known my Aunt’s name. It was Eleanor, a fine old family name. She was such an Eleanor as would have sucked poison out of her husband’s veins had he been Edward I., but as he was only Thomas Mandeville, of doubtful memory, why! it is lucky that no one stabbed the good easy man with a poisoned dagger, and so put her devotion to the proof.

But instead of a queenly missive, she sat

down and wrote, 'Dear Mrs. Tooth,' &c. to the effect that I was coming to town for one night on my way to school; and as Mrs. Tooth had been kind enough to take me before under her roof, perhaps she would add to this obligation by once more giving me a bed. To all which Mrs. Tooth, I must say, with great good nature had responded, 'that nothing would give her greater pleasure than to see her young friend again.' How it was that she said nothing of the arrow rankling in the Square gardener's calf I know not. Perhaps the wound was healed by the half-crown. Perhaps old Tooth had never found it out. At any rate she said nothing about it, and as I took good care not to show my face in the Square, I have heard nothing about it from that day to this.

On hearing from Mrs. Tooth, my Aunt wrote again to beg that I might be met at the Bath Hotel; and this important point conceded, I went up to town as I have described by the *Highflyer*, and was in Bryanston Square at seven o'clock.

Mrs. Tooth was good and motherly, but I can't say that I thought old Tooth very amiable. He said nothing when Mrs. Tooth announced me as 'Master Halfacre, just come for one night on his way to school,' but mumbled something

out about boys 'making their way in the world as they used to do formerly.' Then he turned to Mrs. 'T,' as he was wont to call her even to her face, and said :

'Mrs. T, there's been bad work in the City to-day. Dreggs and Lees, the great sugar-refiners, have failed for 200,000*l.*, and that has pulled down Holdfast and Lively, our sugar-brokers, in whose hands, I am sorry to say, were the proceeds of two hundred hogsheads of sugar just sold as part of the Two Rivers' crop.'

'Deary me,' said Mrs. Tooth. 'No loss to the firm, I hope.'

'I hope not, Mrs. T, I hope not;' and then he added, 'But we are already under heavy advances towards the estate, which would only have been partly met by the sale of those two hundred hogsheads. Then Rum, too, is a drug, and we are large holders. Fact is, the West Indies are going to the dogs, and to protect ourselves we shall have to foreclose on several of our estates.'

'Deary me,' said Mrs. Tooth again; 'but we had better get down to dinner, or it will get cold.'

Though I couldn't understand the full meaning of what old Tooth said, I was old enough and quick enough to see that something unpleasant had happened to Claw, Tooth, and Nail in general,

and to the Two Rivers Estate in particular. So I ate my dinner in a rather crestfallen mood, old Tooth saying little or nothing, but showing that age had but little impaired his appetite. Mrs. Tooth—good soul that she was!—throwing every now and then a drop of oil on the waves of his surliness, every drop of which no doubt returned to her own bosom, as it had plainly no effect in softening old Tooth.

The dessert, in September, consisted of dried figs of fossil appearance—some of the same figs, in fact, which Noah took with him into the Ark, and which were afterwards returned to the shippers as condemned stores. Then there were Barcelona nuts and a sponge-cake, both of immense antiquity; and there was a bottle of ginger wine. All these dainties old Tooth despatched at such a rate that Mrs. Tooth and I were glad to beat a retreat. I really thought if he went on as fast as he began he would eat us up too.

‘My dear,’ said Mrs. Tooth on the stairs, ‘when Mr. Tooth is like that something dreadful has happened in the City, and then it is always best to let him eat himself to sleep.’

And surely in ten minutes such a sound of snoring followed us upstairs, or up the chimney, that it was amazing to hear.

‘Ah!’ said Mrs. Tooth, ‘now it’s all right. Mr. Tooth will snore in that way till midnight, and then he’ll get up and come to bed like a lamb. And now let us go to bed as soon as we can.’

So to bed we went. Whether old Tooth slept in the arm-chair all night, or not, I cannot tell. All I know is that I saw nothing of him in the morning. After breakfast Mrs. Tooth took me and my trunk—I mean my box, and not my carcass—in a hackney-coach to the ‘Blue Posts,’ at the top of Tottenham Court Road. From that famous inn, now, alas! to be sought for in vain, the Potterbridge go-cart—a nondescript vehicle, half fly, half omnibus, and whole abomination—used to start, reaching Potterbridge in two hours by way of Finchley and Barnet. To the care of the driver of this conveyance I was intrusted, Mrs. Tooth giving him a shilling for himself beforehand, and bidding him be sure to drop me at Dr. Cutbrush’s door, which he passed on the route.

Away the melancholy vehicle crawled along Tottenham Court Road, through the Highgate Archway, past Finchley, by Barnet and Whetstone to Potterbridge. It was not a lively journey to go to school for the first time in this way. My only companions were a farmer who,

to judge by his boots and general appearance, had been up to town with a successful venture of dung, and a maid-servant going home for a holiday from her place in town.

Luckily it was not a long journey, and in about two hours, going at the rate of five miles an hour, we entered Potterbridge, drove past the church, with its fine old yew and its ponds, dipped down a descent, rose a little again, and then the driver got down, and pulled the bell at Dr. Cutbrush's door. The bell gave what I thought a most mournful sound; but in a minute a well-fed servant opened the door, took down my trunk, and showed me the way into the house. It was out of school hours, and I was ushered at once into the awful presence of Dr. Cutbrush. He was a fine, hale, florid-faced man, between fifty and sixty. When he spoke he had a trick of blowing and puffing out his cheeks, but he was not at all a bad master; and, except when he boxed my ears because I would not open my mouth, and kicked both him and the dentist most unmercifully on their shins, he was always very kind to me. Having examined me he said he should place me at the bottom of the school, and leave me to find my level; and in a little while he took me to Mrs. Cutbrush, who handed me over to the house-

keeper in the China Pantry, to wait till it was time for dinner. That meal was not long in coming, and then I saw for the first time the seventy boys who were to be my schoolfellows. I may mention here that the school was a first-rate private school, preparatory for the great public schools, and specially so for Westminster and Harrow.

There were two long tables in the hall. Dr. Cutbrush sat at the head of one, with an usher at the other end, and an usher at each end of the second table. Grace was said, and we ate our meals in silence. I remember our dinner—who would not remember his first school dinner?—was roast mutton and rice pudding. After dinner the doctor called up a boy with curly locks and a ruddy face.

‘McArthur,’ he said, ‘this is Halfacre. You are to be his substance for a week, and he is to be your shadow for the same time. Take care that he gets into no scrapes, and that he prepares his lessons. If he commits any faults in the next week, they will be reckoned to you.’

‘Very well,’ said McArthur, who then turned to me with a ‘Come along!’ after which he pushed open a door, through which all the rest had already vanished while the doctor was talking to McArthur; and at one step we stood

in the playground, a large gravelled yard, surrounded on all sides by a high wall, and shaded on one side by a row of horse-chestnuts.

Everybody knows what happens when a boy first goes to school. The cry of 'New boy!' is raised—a knot gathers round him—'What's your name?'—'Where do you live?'—'Edward!' 'Edward what? not King Edward?' says another boy, who knows something of English history.

'Edward Halfacre!'

'What an odd name! Has your father only half-an-acre?'

'In what country is your father's half-acre?'

'In Warwickshire and the West Indies.'

'What a long half-acre to stretch so far!'

'How many brothers have you got?'

'Six.'

'What a lot!'

'Any sisters?'

'No! but I ought to have been one to please Aunt Mandeville.'

'Who's your Aunt Mandeville?'

'I know her,' says a Warwickshire boy, who ran up just in time to hear the question. 'She lives at Mandeville Hall, and no one ever sees her. They say it's a ghost's house.'

'No, it ain't,' I summoned up courage to reply.

‘Don’t be impudent, or you’ll get a smack in the face.’

Now, I hadn’t been baked so long in the West Indies not to have warm Southern blood; so I gave the smack in the face to the Warwickshire boy which he threatened to give me. He returned it; and we had a fight which lasted just long enough to show that I could give blows as well as take them; but just as victory hung in the balance, Dr. Cutbrush appeared at a window from a dormitory which overlooked the playground, attended by a parent who thought of sending a boy to the school, and had run down to look at the place.

‘There you see them,’ said the doctor, as he led his visitor to the window; ‘there you see them employing the hours allotted to them for bodily recreation and relaxation in rational amusements. We are a happy family at Potterbridge, and it is very seldom that a quarrel occurs.’

The visitor put his neck out, the doctor just having beaten him by a head, and saw the Warwickshire boy, whose name was Deepdale, bleeding profusely from the nose, while one of my eyes was already quite bunged up. Yes, reader, ‘bung’ is the word; my left eye was quite bunged up.

What did the doctor do or say? As to what he said no boy could tell; but what he did was to

withdraw his visitor as rapidly as possible from the window, to bow him out of the house, to go to his study, and to a particular cupboard, where he had a goodly stock of birch, to choose a fine swishing rod, to put on his gown, to stride across the playground, puffing out his cheeks like a grampus, to call the boys into school, though it was a half-holiday, and there and then to flog the unhappy Deepdale for fighting me, and the still more unhappy McArthur for letting me fight.

Me he merely called the Game Chicken, Cribb, Mendoza, and Scroggins, all names great in the 'fancy' of those days, but now, alas! buried in the gloom of night.

'Halfacre,' the doctor added, 'if it had been a week off, I should have flogged you instead of McArthur. You now see what it is to be substance, and what shadow.'

Every boy, except very stupid or very good boys, has a nickname. Mine was 'Mendoza,' because I had fought a good stand-up fight the first day. It was true the historical boy, who knew about the Edwards, wanted to call me 'Edward the Confessor,' or 'Teddy the Confessor,' because I had told them so much about my family.

'He would have told us more too if Deepdale hadn't spoilt it all,' he said; but the other boys, who did not care for history, wouldn't

hear of Edward the Confessor ; they said it was like lessons ; and so the historical boy,—of whom I may say it without breach of confidence that he is now head of the Civil Service Commission in Timbuctoo, where he sets most head-splitting questions to the sable candidates for place and power,—had no followers. Edward the Confessor, as bearing on me, was utterly forgotten at Potterbridge ; Mendoza I became, and Mendoza I remained to the end of the chapter of my life at a private school.

How about my lessons ? And this reminds me that I have never told you a word of what I had been taught or knew. Now if any anxious mother is reading these glimpses of my life, in hope of finding a model on which to educate her darling Augustus or Albert, she had better throw them away, and return to Mrs. Trimmer. My mother had taught me Latin in the West Indies ; and when I came to Potterbridge I knew Busby's Grammar, the dear and old Westminster Grammar, by heart. Since then I have learnt many Grammars, for have I not lived in the days of transition from verse to prose Grammars ? Did I not have to learn a new Grammar every year at least ? Yes ! I have dealt with all Grammars, from Busby up to Zumpt and Matthiæ ; but I never knew any Grammar so well as those darling doggerel hexameters

which I used to con by heart under the orange-trees of Two Rivers. Then I knew a little French, which my mother also taught me; a good deal of geography, a little history, ancient and modern, and a little music. But I shone in none of them particularly. I always did my lessons, could construe when I was put on, got tolerably well through nonsense and into sense verses, could write a theme on 'Sero nunquam est ad bonos mores via,' or 'Deterior est quotidie posterior dies.' I beg leave to say, reader, that *maxim* comes from Publius Syrus, an author of whom you had better not say you have never heard, or I will confute you socratically. Thus. You have read the 'Edinburgh Review'? Regularly, you answer. Well then what is the motto of the periodical in blue and buff?—that periodical which wears the uniform of the King of Sweden's 2nd Regiment of Guards. You don't know? I'll tell you. '*Judex damnatur cum nocens absolvitur.*' That too comes from Publius Syrus, and a very good rule it is if it is carried out, and I wish it were carried out more often. You say you never looked at the outside of the 'Edinburgh Review'? You are always deep in the inside. Well! the outsides of some things are better than the insides. The outside of a tomb, of a crowd, of a prison. Even outsides go for something, especially when there

is nothing inside. So now you will look at the outside of the next number of the 'Edinburgh Review,' and find what I tell you true.

But to return to my theme. I did my lessons regularly; I was never black-strapped on a cold morning, that is, beaten on the palm of the hand with a cart-trace, a less disgraceful but far more painful punishment than any flogging; nay, I was never flogged at all for anything, though I often deserved it for other things besides lessons, as when I threw a stone over the wall and hit the curate's wife on the head. Old Cutbrush rushed in again, and was going to flog every tenth boy, but I went up and confessed; and when he said, 'Fetch me a rod, monitor,' I appealed, and asked:

'What's the good of confessing, if one's to be flogged all the same?'

And old Cutbrush was just, and forgave me the flogging, but made me write a copy of verses, in which I made all sorts of fun of Mrs. Blowsy, the curate's wife; that was not her real name, but we called her Blowsy and Blousibella because she was so 'baggy' and such a slattern. I remember one line in which I said that she turned up her eyes after receiving the blow of the stone.

'Qualiter in tonitru lumina tollit anas.'

Old Cutbrush was a good fellow at heart and a good scholar, and said the verses were rather smart, but he said, 'Halfacre, I don't quite catch the sense of this line. I wish you would construe it.'

'It's quite a common simile,' I replied; 'Mrs. Blowsy—Mrs. Brownsmith, I beg her pardon—turned up her eyes so queerly that I likened her to a dying duck in a thunder-storm, at which moment Buffon says dying ducks lift their eyes in a very peculiar way!'

'Indeed!' said the doctor. 'I daresay you and Buffon are quite right, but I must say I never heard of this fact in natural history before.'

This, as you may suppose, was towards the end of my career at Potterbridge, when I had quite established my character with the doctor, and was getting to the top of the school.

I remember the first winter at Potterbridge was rather trying. They tell you, or used to tell you, that West Indians brought a store of caloric with them which enabled them to stand the first winter better than born Britons, who have never crossed the sea. I can't say I believe it. I think that warmth of the body in winter, strange as some people may think the theory, depends first on good food and lots of it. This we got

at Potterbridge, which was in no sense a Do-theboys Hall. Secondly, on warm clothing and lots of it. With this my Aunt amply provided me. Thirdly, on good fires and being near them. The first part of this need was well met by the doctor. There were two great fires in the school-room, but then there were seventy boys, and out of seventy boys some will necessarily be bigger than the rest, and those in wet, cold weather will gather round the fires and keep the little ones off, just as they make the little boys fag out at cricket and football, and so serve an apprenticeship. I can safely say that for two winters I never once saw the fire out of school-time, and in school-time it was like what the Promised Land was to the Israelites in the Wilderness, a thing that they had heard talked of so long for forty years without seeing it, that they began to doubt whether the Promised Land existed at all. So too with cricket, I declare that I never once had an innings for two summers, which were spent on an agreeable variety of fagging out; extending all round the wicket from Longstop to Point, but never once settling at the wicket itself. They say it is bad for little children to see the fire, but for my own part I would sooner be baked than frozen to death.

The holidays, of course, I spent with Aunt

Mandeville, and great fun they always were. The doctor used to take me up to town, and put me into the coach, and the *Highflyer* rattled merrily along, the guard blowing his horn. That was in the height of the coaching days, when the Duke of Beaufort drove this coach and Sir St. Vincent Cotton that, and when horses drew coaches as no horses ever drew them before or since; when it was utterly effeminate to go inside, and when in my particular case my legs used to dangle over the side of the coach as I sat just behind the coachman—I was too young yet to aspire to the box seat—till by the time we reached Warwick they were stiff and numbed.

But at the 'Dun Cow' there was always Aunt Mandeville waiting to meet me, and away we drove to Mandeville Hall as fast as the ponies could scamper; and there stood old Brooks with his bald head and tyrannical ways, year after year just the same, never getting greyer or thinner, but wearing quite as well as the portrait of Gevartius in the National Gallery, which it provokes one to see never getting any older, while we who look on it grow more and more grizzled.

The winter holidays were best, I think. There was shooting, and I already looked forward

to having a gun. Did not young Wryneck, at Potterbridge, Lord Scatterbrains' son, already shoot so well that he could kill a dozen swallows without missing one. Never frown, Mr. Sykes, this was long before your Gull Bill, and still longer before your Pigeon and Swallow Bill of next Session, just as the Irish Church Bill is before the English Church Bill, which the whole Ecclesiastical body looks forward to with fear and trembling. Yes! young Wryneck, whose tongue, I remember, reached [further out of his mouth than any boy's that I ever knew, and whose nickname was *venter*, or glutton, because, when he was recovering from the scarlet fever—of course we had our scarlet fever periodically at Potterbridge, just as our forefathers had their 'small-pox,'—he wished for and got a basin of chicken-broth. Young Wryneck, I tell you, could shoot a dozen swallows without missing one, and it was said that if two martens were clinging to the eaves, as martens will do, he would shoot the right-hand bird and leave the left, or the left-hand bird and leave the right, which you chose. Young Wryneck had long carried a gun, and therefore why shouldn't I carry one too? It is very true that young Wryneck, who is now Lord Scatterbrains, and my very good friend, never did anything else than shoot; and, besides, if he

had not spent his time in shooting he might have been doing something worse. There are worse things in the world for young and old men to do than shooting. Take my word for it, Mrs. Killjoy.

Then there was hunting, and, though I longed for a fire at Potterbridge when it was wet, and they shut us up in the schoolroom, I cared not for cold or wet on my pony after the North Warwickshire hounds. What brooks did I not flounder into? What bullfinches did I not creep through? What 'croppers' did I not get? As Aunt Mandeville, but for Brooks and the coachman, would have gone out shooting with me, so, but for the coachman and Brooks, she would certainly have gone out hunting. She could ride well enough; Mr. Ribbons said, he had often seen her take a fence in Squire Mandeville's time, when she was more lively-like; it wasn't that. But in Warwickshire it was not the thing for widows to hunt, any more than for curates to shoot. Rectors, of course, might shoot, and did shoot, just as deans could, and bishops couldn't; but with women, only wives—that is, women whose husbands are alive, I say—might hunt. If a widow hunted she would lose her character at once.

This was the coachman's notion as to shooting

and hunting. Whether my Aunt agreed with him I cannot say, but certainly she never went out with the hounds, though I am quite sure she would have given her eyes, as the saying is, to have done so, merely to be with me.

CHAPTER XII.

HOW I WENT TO WESTMINSTER.

THREE years had now rolled by, and I was nearly fourteen. 'That boy,' old Mindererus used to say, 'has never anything the matter with him;' and so it was. I defied the Doctor and all his draughts. Aunt Mandeville was no coddle, though she dreaded the Doctor, because the day had been when he attended her husband, and shook his head; and she knew the day would come when Dr. Mindererus, or some other doctor, would shake his head over her, and say:

'Poor lady, I am afraid she is not long for this world.'

Was she afraid to die? No. But you may not be afraid of a thing, and yet not like it; and so it was with my Aunt.

Where were we? Oh! The Doctor said I never had anything the matter with me; and he was right. Thanks to the West Indies, I never had a cough in my life; and thanks to Aunt Mandeville, who still kept up her aversion to sugar, and, in spite of the West Indies, my diges-

tion was as that of the ostrich. I mention this to show that I was fit to go to a public school, where, in my days at least, the weakest went to the wall. Without being a Hercules, a hero of Muscular Christianity, I was quite able to hold my own at any game, and I still did my lessons fairly. My brothers were at Harrow; but I saw little of them. We were very good friends, only we scarcely ever met. I have told you that Aunt Mandeville was jealous, and she always seemed afraid that my father and mother or brothers would come and take me away from her. Once she had my brothers down to Mandeville Hall for a week, but she did not ask them to prolong their stay. Mr. Brooks said they were very rude, and quite unfit to keep company with Master Edward. The fact was that my brothers had persuaded old Brooks to get into a punt on the lake, under pretence of giving him a little fishing. They had then pushed him off without pole or oar, when the wind was strong off shore, and, I grieve to say, pelted him with stones—an outrage at which, I am ashamed to add, I greatly rejoiced. But it was fatal to my brothers' reputation. That was the first and last visit they ever paid, in my time, to Mandeville Hall.

My Aunt declared she would never send me to a school where boys were so ill-mannered.

Unlike most women, she was a Whig. Women take to Toryism naturally as ducklings to the water. But my Aunt was a Whig from family and principle. As the Mandevilles had been Jacobites and Tories, the Halfacres had been pure Whigs. Pure Whigs—think of that!—a thing which you must be born, and cannot become. Parodying the Articles, one might say, ‘Pure Whiggery lieth not in the following of Charles Fox, as the men at Brooks’s do vainly fable, but is the beauty and perfection of the nature of every man and woman who is naturally engendered of pure Whig parents; so that such children are, as it were, predestinated to place and office by peculiar fitness of their nature, and for no special merit of their own.’ Yes! Auntie was a born Halfacre and a pure Whig. My father was a pure Whig, and had been sent to Westminster, the great Whig school. In a weak moment my mother, who was a Tory, had persuaded him to send my brothers to Harrow; and see what came of it. They learnt little, and when they were on a holiday they pelted old Brooks the butler in a punt.

So my Aunt resolved to send me to Westminster, for which, as I have said, Dr. Cutbrush’s was a special preparation; and two years before I went there I remember going with Dr. Cutbrush to Westminster, and seeing a play which

turns on the history of a man who was similarly situated to the high official at Queen Candace's court, whom St. Philip met before he was found at Azotus. Now, if that is not a delicate periphrasis for the name of Terence's play, and for the convert of St. Philip, may I be in the same position at the Court of the Waag Shum Gobazie, who was of such infinite use to our army in the Abyssinian Campaign !

So I went to Westminster. I remember the very first day I went there being taken down to the barges in Abingdon Street, and there seeing an unhappy coalheaver, named 'Wrynecked George'—who is there who now recollects such a coalheaver?—slip off one of the barges and perish.

'Why doesn't he come up?' I asked of one of his companions, who was vacantly gazing at the river just after the accident.

'He has come up,' was the sad answer, 'and has knocked his head against the bottom of the barge, and been stunned, and gone down again. The drags will find him ; but we shall never see "Wrynecked George" alive again.'

I had paddled about a little on the lake at Mandeville Hall, but besides knew little of rowing ; and I also remember being put on the water by a sixth-form boy, with another new boy no wiser in rowing than myself, and being

told to row over to Roberts's, the boat-builder. So we set to work, back to back, to the intense delight of the boys on the stairs and barges, the result being that we pulled the boat round and round; and in that rotary fashion a strong ebb tide carried us fast through one of the arches of old Westminster Bridge, so that in due time we should have made the acquaintance of old London Bridge as well, but feeling that we were all wrong, I got up, and hailed a waterman in a wherry — there were wherries and watermen on the Thames in those days—who, for a shilling, took us in tow, and sculled us back to Lambeth Walk.

Much to the doctor's dismay, I was placed in the under school, and was therefore a fag for a while. I soon got out of the under school, but I am sure the fagging I underwent did me a world of good, and were I to go to school again, I would sooner begin as a fag. It is all stuff to call it degrading. At Westminster, too, the fags were protected by their masters, and at night almost fed by them. Many a night and oft I should have gone from one till nine P.M. with nothing to eat, had it not been for my master's 'Tuck,' as it was called, in the winter time, at six o'clock.

Westminster boys have always been a manly,

self-reliant race. It was of Fitzroy Somerset, afterwards Lord Raglan, an old Westminster, that the Duke of Wellington said that, when he intrusted any order to an Old Westminster, he was sure it would be carried out. The story has been appropriated by Eton and other schools, but it was said of Old Westminsters. They are fond of their school, too; at least they say they are. Let them prove their fondness by sending their children to it, and not listen to mothers who overcrowd Eton till it is so unwieldy that no education is possible, or to the doctors who say that a London school is unhealthy.

But this has little to do with my life. When I went to Westminster the school was full, and full of boys of good family. There were Byngs, Grosvenors, Pagets, Lennoxes, Pettys—all the old Whig families. There was the grand old Abbey, with its fighting-green, in which there were still fights. Then, too, there was hockey round the Cloisters—very bad for the monuments of the dead, but very good for the bones of the living. What recks, I should be glad to know, Sir Edmundsberry Godfrey in his grave close by the gate of the Chapter-house, of the doings of men or boys now? Or ‘Jane Lister, dear child,’ in the Cloisters, would racket-balls disturb her rest?

Or even Edward the Confessor—after whom I so narrowly escaped being nicknamed, after the eight hundred years which have passed since he died on Childermass-day,—does he care whether balls are tossed by children over his bones? or Vincentius and Laurentius Abbas, those apocryphal abbots, over the last of whom, if he lies under that slippery blue slab, I got one of the worst falls I ever had in my life, slipping up backwards on a greasy November morning.

Then, too, the Green in Dean's Yard was open to us summer as well as winter. Many a hot summer day I have lain as happy as twenty kings, in the shade of the great elm which stood at the corner near the gateway, and fell, some time after I left, nearly carrying away Queen Anne's Bounty Office. I should not have cared if it had carried it away altogether. I have heard it said the grass of the Green is more valuable to the Chapter than the pastimes of the boys. If so, the sooner the boys are reinstated, and the Chapter disendowed, the better. Then the pump in Dean's Yard, sung in so many epigrams, the spring at which so many thirsty souls slaked their thirst—on Sunday especially, when the poor held their great feast of pitchers. The pump, alas! is dry—cut off by the Metropolitan District Railway, they say, which has pumped all the

moisture out of Westminster. Alas ! poor pump ! St. David's Day and Sir Watkin still survive, but where is the ditch-leaping that followed ? where are those delightful three-quarter-holidays called Early Plays, on one of which this ditch-leaping took place ? where are Big Ben, Spanking Sam, and the Black Joke ?—ditches that no leap could clear, and into which we all fell, and floundered through ? Gone, gone, filled up. Battersea Park now covers their remains, though I think I can still detect 'Spanking Sam' in one of the drains left in that flourishing plantation.

Nor let me forget the Peregrines that built on the Abbey Towers, the terror of the pigeons which nestled among the buttresses lower down. How we used to watch the noble birds, who, in defiance of London smoke and noise—far above it, in fact—had chosen this favourite haunt of pigeons for their eerie ! There they lasted all through my time. Often have I seen the feathers fly as they struck a pigeon, and bore it aloft ; and there they or their descendants might still be, had not some wretch lost to all feeling, some carrion crow or buzzard in human shape, lain in wait upon the leads with a gun and shot one of the birds for fun. May hawks harry him in a future state, and may his eyes be pecked out for fun !

There was Shrove-Tuesday, and its pancake,

and its cook, who sometimes failed to toss it over the bar, and, when he did fail, was 'booked;' that is to say, every boy threw a book at him, much to Ginger the bookseller's benefit, and he fled as fast as he could lay legs to the ground down school, with all but the sixth form and seniors at his heels. The sixth form were like the 10th Lancers: as the tenth never danced, the sixth never ran; they were like the gods, they had a motion of their own; they walked down school. Every one in any other form had to run up and down school. The pancake-tossing still exists, but sometimes, when the cook fails, and is booked, he gets in a rage, and throws his frying-pan at some boy's head with considerable effect. I think I may say had the cook in our time attempted such a thing, there would not have been left a bit of him to boil or roast. He would have been torn to pieces, and an inquest of Old Westminsters would have sat on the bits, and brought in a unanimous verdict of Justifiable Coquicide.

Then there was College — that mysterious school within a school, against which we 'Town-boys,' who would have thought it beneath us to go into College, had so many grudges and heart-burnings; and there were the challenges for getting into College—the most trying and exhaustive mode of election known; and when boys got into

College before entering it, they were tossed in a blanket to the following Latin rhyme, which may be as old as Laurentius Abbas, or the Confessor himself. I am inclined to think, if there were any blankets in the Confessor's time, that boys were tossed in them. But this was the rhyme:—

‘Ibis ab excusso
Missus ad astra sago.’

And as it is not every one that knows the right way to toss boys in a blanket, I may pause to tell you how it is done. Eight or ten strong fellows take several blankets,—one or two would be too thin. They lay hold of them at the corners and sides, and pull against each other at the pauses of the rhyme. Thus, ‘Ibis āb,’ one pull; ‘excussō,’ another, stronger; ‘missus ād,’ another; ‘astra sagō,’ the strongest of all. By which time the wight in the blanket who has been from the first as lively as a parched pea on a drumhead, flies up to the sky a wondrous height, and is caught and tossed again in the same way, to the same rhythm, as he descends. It is said to be very great fun for all concerned, but most of all to those who toss.

Then there was the water, and the funnies, cutters, wherries, punchbowls, and half-deckers that thronged the river daily. As I have said

that in those times there were no envelopes, I may add that in those days there were no penny steamers to interfere with rowing. Sailing barges were our great enemies, and often I have been in fear of my life from them; but how we used to go on the water! What races and sculling matches we used to have! Very soon after I went to Westminster I got a 'stick-licking,' a very nasty thing let me tell you, that made you black and blue all over, for leaving the boat-hook of a four-oared, which I steered, hanging on Putney Bridge, when we started against four other four-oars to race to Westminster. We got a good start by leaving the boat-hook behind, but I smarted for it in a way which makes me remember it right well. And the Eight, what pulls they used to leave on an 'early play,' when tide served, rowing down to Greenwich, shooting that headlong old London Bridge by the way, and back again by one o'clock; then to Richmond on the last of the flood-tide, and back with the ebb in the afternoon—a pretty good spell of rowing for one day.

But now, where is the Westminster water? where are her Eights? and where is her annual match with Eton? It will soon be one of these events which no fellow can remember.

Well, one half got me out of fagging, and I then took so well to my books that I got two bye-removes running, that is to say, I got up four forms in the year instead of two, and this comforted good Dr. Cutbrush, because I had not only recovered my lost ground, but had beaten many of my contemporaries; but I warn you from fancying that I was at all a prodigy of learning. Now I think of it, I never got a single prize at Westminster, except a few silver pennies for epigrams. It was a custom of the school that between Christmas and Easter subjects were given out each week on which any boy, who chose, might write an epigram, and if he thought it good enough he might run up with it to the headmaster's desk, and read it out aloud. If it were bad he was treated with derision; if it were good the headmaster dipped his hand in a bag and gave him some silver pennies. I got some more than once, and I have them still. They were all the prizes I ever got at Westminster.

CHAPTER XIII.

HOW THINGS WENT IN ST. SACCHARISSA.

WHILE I was flourishing in England what became of my father and mother, who were left behind in the West Indies six years ago? There things went from bad to worse, the worst of all being that my father had taken some of his English money from the Warwickshire Estates and thrown it into the Great Dismal Swamp of St. Saccharissa. Now his own balance was gone as well as Colonel Ratoon's, Claw, Tooth, and Nail had both come under advances, and held mortgages on Two Rivers, which in the good old time could have been rapidly cleared off by good crops and high prices; but as evils never come single, bad crops had run neck and neck with low prices. One year there was a drought, and the canes were good for walking-sticks, dry and tough, but would yield no juice,—no, not even to Nail and Screw's crusher. The next year was too wet, and the canes gave plenty of juice, only it had no saccharine matter. 'Too plenty

rain,' the negroes said, 'jist de same for make sugar, wid no rain at all.'

Then strange insects appeared, a great army like the palmer-worm of the prophets, grasshoppers, and locusts, which ate up every green thing, and mole-crickets, a sort of insect mole which burrowed in the ground, and destroyed the roots of the cane. Claw, Tooth, and Nail were equal to the occasion. They consigned,—of course, 'under advances'—to my father, fifty hogsheads of salt and one hundred puncheons of lime at Heaven knows what price per puncheon and hogshead, and one hundred carboys of sulphuric acid; with a letter of instruction and advice, in which they told my father that, having consulted Dr. Smellfungus, the great analytical chemist, whose days were chiefly spent in examining the entrails of men and women, supposed to have been poisoned, he had recommended that the female locust should be sprinkled with salt, and the male with lime, when he knew, I suppose, out of his 'inner consciousness,' that they would both shrivel up and vanish. The sulphuric acid was a 'prophylactic'—yes, that is the word in old Claw's letter!—against the mole-cricket. 'You must watch for the creature till it emerges from its burrow, and pour a drop of the acid on his occiput.' Why he couldn't say

head I cannot tell. There it stands in the letter now before me 'occiput.' The only objection to this treatment of the 'creature' was that mole-crickets never came out of their holes any more than the *talpa* or common mole.

That, at any rate, was how some of the money went. These remedies were first cousin to the nursery one of sprinkling salt on a bird's tail: they might have succeeded, only it was quite impossible to apply them. Here was another case in which my father was the martyr of science. Claw, Tooth, and Nail were indefatigable patrons of science with other men's money; they paid Smellfungus high for his opinion. If he lived now he would read a Paper on the Extirpation of 'Mole-Crickets' at the Entomological Society, and the penny-aliners would call him 'the eminent chemist;' but, alas! he lived before the era of learned societies, and great travellers, and the Brothers Fressensheitz, who subsisted, as Umbra tells us, for two whole years on camels' dung in Central Asia, and then coming home recited their feelings before one of the most crowded meetings ever held of the Stercological Society. The salt, the lime, and the sulphuric acid, too, came to a pretty penny; and as to get them—Claw, Tooth, and Nail had 'come under advances,'—they only

cost double what they need have done ; and then there was the forty per cent commission, and freight and landing. The salt and sulphuric acid were worse than thrown away ; we had lots of salt of our own ; and the sulphuric acid was stowed away in an outhouse till one of the carboys was tapped by a night-walking nigger—Mercury, perhaps.

‘Jest, massa, for ouwee see what inside him. Suppose he rum. When jest me got bung out, Sambo give me one push behind ; me tink a jackass kick me. Ober go de jar ; out come de rum. Sambo jest toop down to taste him with his lilly finger, when, phiz ! few ! something ’xplode and catch fire, and we both run out to sabe our life. Dat, massa, how de outhouse catch fire before massa say Jack Robinson ; and dat how de outhouse burn down.’

‘But how did it catch light ?’ asked my father.

‘Why you see, massa,’ said Mercury, ‘Sambo berry bad nigger. He smoke pipe. Ebery night I say, Sambo ! Sambo ! where you ’spect to go to after dis world ober ? I Churchman, massa. I go wid massa whereber massa go. Massa safe to go to Hebben ; such a good massa ! But Sambo Baptist ; he beleeb what Methodist say. They say ebery nigger bear his own load in dis

world, and de same in de next; dat why me no like Metodist. Me bear load in dis world, but massa bear de load for me in the next. Dat why I stick to massa. But Sambo lazy nigger; smoke pipe; sleep in sun; nebber bear any load in dis world; him hab to carry ten men load in de next. So, just for frighten Sambo, I say, "Sambo, Sambo! watchman come!" and he so 'fraid he gib me great push behind, and say, Get out of de way, and jest den ober go the jar, and out fall a spark from Sambo pipe; and so, massa, come de complagratium.'

As for the lime, it was used up in time; but it was really no use, because the sea threw up quantities of coral, which was gathered into heaps and burnt at stated times into the best of lime.

But these were trifles: only the last grain that breaks the camel's back. Real ruin came with Emancipation. I know it is the fashion to talk of the generosity of England to the West Indian proprietors. Generosity! A highwayman is generous when, after robbing a traveller of a hundred sovereigns, he throws him two or three pieces to take him on to the next town. Very generous, no doubt, to put your hands into the pocket of a man and take out a pound, and then to put half-a-crown into it! That was about

what the twenty millions came to. Slavery was, no doubt, a great evil—greater to the proprietors than to any one else; but the way in which it was done away was the first step to that great march of sentimental humbug which has been going on in England ever since. Solid and old-established interests are sacrificed to the sentiment and clamour of a clique, who gratify their sentiment very often at the expense of the class against which the outcry is raised, and fill their own pockets into the bargain.

But, fair or unfair, there could be no doubt of the consequences to the proprietors. Claw, Tooth, and Nail first got all the compensation—some thirty thousand pounds in our case; and that having stopped their maw for a while, my father, if he had taken my Aunt's advice, would have thrown up Two Rivers and returned to England; but, by a strange infatuation, both he and my mother had grown quite fond of the spot which had caused them so much misery. It was a lovely island; they liked the house, the sea, the sky, the slaves—or, as they were now to be called, 'apprentices.' Blind as the mole-cricket, they resolved to stay on, and they even had my eldest brother out from Cambridge to stay with them for a year.

'My dear child,' said my Aunt in her soft

way, 'they will be giving Claw, Tooth, and Nail a mortgage on Halfacre Hall next; see if the firm don't try to persuade your father and our John to cut off the entail.'

My mother wrote constantly to me, and my father sometimes. He was always a magnificent background to me—something to look forward to—and let me tell you that in painting this is no bull, you must look forward to the background and distance of a picture; but mothers are a sunny, smiling foreground on which all one's best feelings come out and warm themselves in the genial light. The father's day is to-morrow, that day that never comes. The mother's is to-day, the day that is here next to you, which takes up all your time; it will be time enough to think of your father when to-morrow comes. And yet I did often think of my father. I was far enough off to feel for him, and to grieve to have to agree with Aunt Mandeville that he was wasting his life on a dream, and the most unreal of dreams, that of making both ends meet round a West India estate after emancipation day, when instead of bringing the ends closer together, every day drew them farther apart.

I have told you my Aunt was jealous, and how she treated my brothers at the instigation of Brooks. She showed it in everything. I be-

longed to her, and I should belong to no one else. If I was ill, she nursed me. No maid should give me Dr. Mindererus' medicines. No woman bent on poisoning her husband could have watched over him more tenderly to see that he took his death-bane properly. That was when I had the measles ; and old Brooks—idiot that he was!—had allowed me to get up with the rash on me, while my Aunt went down for half-an-hour to see her agent. When Dr. Mindererus came he said I was much worse, and mumbled something of a chill and water on the brain, and that dolt Brooks. I can't remember much about it, for I had a strange sort of humming in the head, and I recollect I thought a queen bee had flown in at my ear and been followed by a whole hive. But, instead of a rush of bees, I had a rush of blood to the head, all owing to that Brooks. But it was worth being ill to see how my Aunt watched over me when I was getting better.

Then it was that she gave a fresh proof of her jealousy. A letter came from my mother in which she very innocently said how glad she was to have John with her, and how some day she hoped I would follow his example and come to see them at St. Saccharissa 'if your Aunt Man-deville will let you. We shall never come home,' she went on in a melancholy strain, 'we

shall lay our bones here, and I should like you to see us, and the old place, before we die.'

I was very weak, and I threw the half-read letter over to my Aunt to see what it contained. As she read I watched her. After she had read it through, she flushed red, she grew ashy pale—grey, almost like a dead leaf, the hue of a fallow field, when nature is dead in winter time.

'Child,' she said, 'I see it all. They want to take you away from me. If they once get you out there in that horrible new place. How dare they call it "old," when here in England, at Halfacre Hall, is *the* old place, which has come down from Halfacre to Halfacre, from father to son, since the battle of Ashdown, where Alfred smote the Danes. How dare she call that "Two Rivers," that upstart estate, that beggar on horseback, that Sugar-loaf, that Twelfth Cake Ornament, "old?" It will melt away from them some morning. No! you shall never go to them. If your mother wants to see you she must come home, as my brother ought to have done long ago. Remember you belong to me, you are mine!' And then, remembering how ill I had been, and her passion fading from her as quickly as heat from iron, she added in her usual soft winning way, as she leant over and kissed my wan face:

'You are mine! dear to me as my own child;

are you not, Edward? But I am a wilful woman, and from first to last I must have my own way.'

Soft as a silken string when things went smooth, but savage as a fury when thwarted, was my Aunt Mandeville.

Yet there was no doubt that she loved me now more than anything on earth.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOW I WENT TO OXFORD.

THAT illness, and the scene I have related, happened when I was about eighteen, just before I left Westminster, and when it was not settled whether I should go to Oxford or Cambridge. My brother John was at Trinity—Trinity, Cambridge, I mean; for though I am an Oxford man, I believe that there is only one Trinity. I rather think this was the real reason why my Aunt sent me to Christ Church. Let Cambridge men be just and acknowledge that, as there is only one Trinity, so there is only one Christ Church. Let both Cambridge and Oxford confess that there is but one Trinity and but one Christ Church, and our articles of faith will be full. We have no need of thirty-nine. Those were for the sixteenth century, when the clergy read homilies and never wrote their own sermons. How I wish they never wrote them now! This is the only article that Oxford and Cambridge of the nineteenth century need. What the undergraduates of the

other Colleges and Halls will say to this Confession of Faith I cannot say, and do not much care. I look upon them as the Angel Gabriel did when he was disputing with a certain dark person for the body of Moses. I do not abuse them, or bring against them any 'railing accusation.' I look upon them, in short, with supreme contempt. Let them follow the example of the devils, and believe and tremble at my angelic faith.

I need hardly say, then, that my Aunt settled that I should go to Christ Church. Squire Mandeville had been there; and though he was a staid, sober man after he married my Aunt, and for the short time they lived together there were stories about him current with the 'scouts,' when I went up to 'The House,' that showed him to have been playful as a kitten.

'Bless you, Mr. Halfacre,' old Filch would say, 'the gentlemen as come up now ain't half as light-hearted and gay as they used to be in my time. Talk of pinks; why, when I was first in the House, you couldn't count them. And your uncle Mandeville,—many's the supper-party I've served for him; and the flip, and the bishop, and the cardinal, and the songs; all manner of larks. Why, he it was that first painted the Dean's door red. The same thing's done now, but there was some fun in being the first to do it. All that

comes after is mere imitation like. Then, too, who first bribed the porter to toll Tom one hundred and two instead of one hundred and one?—why, Mr. Mandeville. Who locked Dean Jackson and young Mr. Barnes into the library, and kept them there the whole afternoon?—Mr. Mandeville. I think I see him with his smiling face, as cool as a cucumber, going in to see the Dean, who had inquired particularly for him; for Mr. Mandeville, when he heard there was to be a row, went to his tutor and gave himself up. He were not a sneak, weren't Mr. Mandeville. And what do you think he told the Dean? Why, when the Dean, with his wig on,—the reason why the deans are not respected now is that they don't wear wigs. Bless you, you would have as soon seen Dean Jackson out without his kneebreeches as without his wig,—what do you think Mr. Mandeville said, when the Dean asked him how he dared lock him up? Why, he made him a low bow, and said, nothing could be further from his intention than to lock him or young Mr. Barnes up; but he knew there were some valuable things in the library, and he was afraid some dishonest persons might get in, and as he was coming across Peckwater, going down to the boats, he saw the key in the door, and locked it, and put the key in his pocket, and went on the water and forgot it till

he came back, and here it was; and with that he pulled out the key, and handed it to the Dean with another low bow.'

'And what did the Dean do?'

'Do! why, what could he do but make him another low bow back, and thank him for the care he had taken of the key? Next day Mr. Mandeville dined with the Dean.'

But that was nearly the end of my uncle's tether. The Dons were too much for him at last, old Filch said, just for all the world like a fox that often hunted, and often escaping, still comes to the hounds at last. One fine night, Uncle Mandeville with others met the junior Proctor in the walks, and tied him to a tree, where he passed a good part of the night while they went down to Sandford Feast, and only knocked in just before twelve. Unfortunately for them the junior Proctor, Jerry Sneak—that was not his name, but that was his nickname in the University—had got loose and stood at the gate, hiding in the porter's lodge at 'Tom' to see who knocked in. After that he put on beaver and crept up the staircase in Peckwater where my uncle's rooms were, and listened at the door, while he had a supper-party, to overhear what was said. Then it was, alas! that my uncle committed that atrocity which the Dean said was

enough to restore the hair of a bald man. Going out of his rooms for something, he found the unhappy Jerry lurking on the staircase, and, pretending not to know him, incontinently kicked him down stairs; Jerry, all the while, exclaiming, 'Don't you know me, Mr. Mandeville? I am the junior Proctor.'

'I don't believe a word you say,' said my uncle, who probably thought that his cup was full, and that he might make it overflow a little. 'I don't believe a word you say. Where are your academics? A junior Proctor in beaver at this hour of night. Get away with you, you rank impostor!' So he chased him into the quad with blows and jeers, and then returned to tell his friends what he had done.

Next morning the Dean held a Chapter, at which Mr. Mandeville and the junior Proctor appeared. My uncle was condemned, almost unheard; a black eye which Mr. Sneak had unfortunately contracted in his headlong descent, speaking eloquently on his side, when my uncle coolly told the Dean that they were going to condemn him on evidence which would be quite insufficient in a court of justice.

'This is a Chapter of Christ Church, and not a court of justice,' said the Dean.

'I am quite aware of it. There is no justice

here,' said my uncle, and was about to retire with a bow, but they would not let him go, in fact, they expelled him on the spot, and his place in Christ Church knew him no more. 'A very wild young man,' as the Dons said. Yet there was his memory as fresh as ever, in old Filch's mind, when I went up to Christ Church forty years after. Such is undergraduate fame.

It was fortunate for me that the Dons' memory was shorter. Some of the young Dons of my uncle's time were very old Dons when I went up, port-logged souls, but the management of 'the Horse' was in younger and abler hands. Sometimes, however, the old lotus-eaters used to appear at collections, and ask us silly questions, and correct our Latin. I remember getting into a sad scrape with one of them, because I began a theme, '*Quis non negaverit.*' "*Quis non negaverit,*" Mr. Halfacre,' chirped out the Canon, 'what does this mean?' When I explained, he said, 'Oh! I see, but it would be far easier to say, *Quis non dicit.* *Dicit,* Mr. Halfacre, an honest straightforward indicative, none of your subjunctives.' I thought of reminding him of one of Paul de Kock's novels, where a lover is detected in disguise, by saying, '*Eh bien! que voulez-vous que j'en fasse.*' '*Voilà du subjonctif,*' said his mistress, and turned him out-of-doors neck and crop. But,

on second thoughts, I knew that this story would be thrown away on him. I have kept it till now, and tell it to you, gentle reader, instead. I shan't tell you in which of Paul de Kock's novels it occurs, and so you will have to read them all through; much good may they do you! but one thing I can tell you, whether you are man or woman, they won't do you half as much harm—I admit their coarseness—as 'Gerfaut,' or 'L'Affaire Clemenceau,' and yet, I daresay, you have read both.

However, I went up to Oxford, and I always look back upon those three years as the happiest of my life. I left Westminster scholar enough to pass Littlego and Greats with little trouble. The Bible,—that great stumbling-block in the way of 'Greats,' that book utterly impossible to be crammed up in six weeks,—that had been made safe by my mother and my aunt. Don't laugh, you enlightened people, who know how to do without the Bible. Don't think me a fool for being taught the Bible almost by heart by two weak women. I say the Bible so learnt is a pearl beyond price, a book full of touching memories, of recollections which sweep across the soul, soothing all the tempests of passion—oil, balm, manna, spices, call it what you will. Let no one mock me for knowing the Bible.

In those days there were but two examinations. Let those who were undergraduates thank their stars for that. Now, I do not even know how many there are. In those days, if a man was a double first, you knew what he was; now he may be double first in insects and stuffed birds, big at beetles, and able to set up a seagull. That they call natural science. Very natural, I call it, that is, very idiotic. If a son of mine has the love of insects or seagulls implanted in him,—nay, even if he should aspire to the place held at court by Mr. Ribbins, who is or was bug-destroyer to Her Majesty,—it will come out quite soon enough in after life. But while he is an undergraduate, let him study the classics and philosophers; and if he is greedy for more, let him take up mathematics, and if they don't satisfy him, I can't tell what is to be done with him.

I was not sent up to read. Of course my Aunt did not expect that I would be plucked in any examination. She wished me to read if I chose; but one of her favourite maxims was that life wouldn't be worth having if everybody were as wise as Solon. Once in a way a wise man may be welcome, but a nation of wise men—
'Child, it would be hell upon earth!'

'Besides,' she went on, 'some people are born

to be fools; why teach them what they can never master? Just like teaching girls without ear, or touch, or taste, or feeling, to play, making music a terror to the world.'

She often said that what she sent me to university for was to learn men and manners; to associate with what she called my 'equals.' She gave me a good allowance; but if Auntie hated one thing with a deeper hatred than that which she bestowed on Claw, Tooth, and Nail, it was debt. 'Never run in debt, Edward. Pay your way like a gentleman. Don't stint yourself, but remember that it is possible—nay, easy, by play and betting, and running to the Jews for a hundred pounds now, and another hundred then,—to empty the deepest purse and ruin the finest estate.'

I often think how unhappy I should now be if I had not kept faith with Aunt Mandeville. She never had to pay a sixpence of debt for me. Perhaps it was owing to her liberal allowance. I knew an unhappy wretch whose father sent him up to Oxford, and expected him to live like a gentleman on fifty pounds a-year. He did live like a gentleman for one year, and then went down for ever, owing three hundred pounds. Poor fellow! he was sent to India, and his bones now lie either on or under the surface

of the Khord Kabul Pass. Parents should remember that there is nothing that goes such a little way as nothing, especially at the university.

Well, then, in October I went up. I remember I came from Leamington to Rugby, and so to Oxford by the famous coach called the *Pig*. Why it was so called I never could find out; perhaps from the obstinacy and porcine propensities of the first driver. But that it was called *Pig* there can be no doubt. Ask any old Rugby man why it was so called, if you know one. I think we went by Southam and Banbury, and so along the valley of the Cherwell to Oxford.

How glad I was to quit the *Pig* and hasten to Christ Church! My rooms were at first in Fell's Buildings,—the old Fell's Buildings, I mean, not those new Fell's Buildings which are enough to make William of Wykeham turn in his grave. How proud I was of my rooms, and yet how miserable those garrets were! I could sit by my fire and open the door, shut the window and poke the fire without rising from my seat. Then, too, the prospect was so lively; the floods were out almost all that term, and Christ Church meadow was one huge lake. However, I managed to get through that term, and the next my tutor made interest with the Dean, and I changed

into excellent rooms in Canterbury. Dear me, when I was last in Oxford I looked up at the windows, and thought of all that had rolled over my head since, and of my first breakfast party in them, and how 'jolly' it was — we only said 'jolly' in those days; not 'awfully jolly' as girls and boys now use the expression every other minute; — and of the old faces, some of them new then, and where the old faces are now; how many of them haggard and wizened; how many of them grinning skulls in India, in the Crimea, beneath the sea deep down hundreds of fathoms in mid-ocean ooze, it may be with electric cables lying close to them, flashing the secrets of one hemisphere to another, and yet those poor empty brain-pans never so much as knew that there were or would be such things as telegraphs. Some lying in fat English churchyards in tombs at which the village urchins throw stones, defacing the legend of their many virtues. Some with no tombs at all. Many dead, some worse than dead. Well, well! Time will have his own, and death and the tax-gatherer no man can cheat, though next January the tax-gatherer will be worse than death, for death till he comes is all prospective, but between this and next January the tax-gatherer will exhibit a pleasing mixture of prospect and retrospect, and we

shall have at once to pay eighteen months' taxes.

But, to come back to my rooms in Canterbury, which I am trying as hard as I can to people with ghosts. Then it was really flesh and blood! though young flesh and blood would do well to reflect sometimes that, after all, its flesh and blood are but a mantle and mask for so much phosphate of lime—I beg pardon of the osteologists if that is not what bones are made of. I have often thought how oddly we pick up our friends; how sympathy lies in one's cold, stony heart, as fire in a flint, till something strikes us, and brings out the spark which burns speedily into friendship. One of my best friends I made by fighting with him. Not that Deepdale of the private school, but one with whom I fought at Westminster. Strange that blows should lead to love! but they did in that case. His name was Mainwaring—no relation, I beg leave to say, of the Cheshire Mainwarings; but of quite another stock. While it lasted—and it lasted long—I don't think I ever loved any man so much. He grew up a bigger, stouter fellow than I was; and when we went up to Christ Church he could have thrashed me easily. Very handsome, too, he was: fair of face, with rich brown hair;—so handsome that women used to

turn round in the streets and bless his 'sweet, pretty face.' At first, 'as freshmen,' we used to be for ever on the water in skiffs. This, again, was before the days of outriggers and canoes. In our second year they coaxed Mainwaring away from me into the eight. He went into training, and used to eat raw beefsteaks, never touch pastry, and run six miles round the Walks before breakfast. Mainwaring was an enthusiast, and threw himself heartily into everything that he did. He said it was 'jolly work—training.' But I think the athletic spirit was not so strong in our generation at Oxford as it is now; for then it was that Cambridge used to beat us so fearfully on the water, while we stood by, wondering how it was that they could ever beat us; but, for all that, they did. The fact was, our eights were too exclusive. I remember a University eight, which had six Christ Church men in it, just as I remember a Christ Church eight, in which every oar was a Westminster man, pulling that fine London stroke which still characterises Oxford from Cambridge pulling. If we had all been Mainwarings we should have beaten Cambridge then as we beat her now; but we were not Mainwarings; we would not take the trouble to train; we would eat pastry after our raw beefsteaks, and cream ices at Jubber's Temple after we came

off the water at night, to say nothing of egg-flip and other nightcaps well known in Oxford butteries, right pleasant to the palate, but very noxious to the stomach and lungs.

Then there was Scatterbrains; but as I shall have something to tell of him afterwards, I shan't say anything about him now, except that he was one of my greatest friends.

Then there was Martingale. He was not an old friend. He was the younger son of an Irish peer; but he has since succeeded to the family estates and honours, his elder brother having broken his neck in 'lepping a dyke,' as the local journal put it. He was mounted on 'a grate horse entirely, and an excellent lepper;' but the brute tripped in clearing the dyke, and the unhappy horseman broke his neck. I made his brother's acquaintance coming home from hunting one raw November afternoon; and we should have been good friends if hunting had lasted all the year round, as an Oxford tutor thought in my time when he said, enraged at what he called my sinful idleness, when in a Chorus of the Agamemnon I could only translate the interjections 'Alas! alas!' and 'Ah me! ah me!' After which he broke out with:

'It is well known, Mr. Halfacre, that you are for ever hunting that disgoostring animal, the

fox—the fox, which animal was sown up in a sack with parricides, when they were drowned along with an ape and a cock. God knows why they put the cock there; but the ape, it is well known, is another most disgoosting animal. You mount your horse, and put on your scarlet coat, in this month of June, and hunt the fox over the fields: that is why you make yourself so ridiculous in lecture.’

I forbore to make him ridiculous by exposing his ignorance of hunting before the lecture-room; but the titter that went round, even from the pale-faced reading men, showed that every one in the room saw that, however much our worthy tutor might know of the punishment of parricides among the ancients, he was profoundly ignorant of the times and seasons for following the fox in modern England.

CHAPTER XV.

HOW SOMETHING HAPPENED AT MANDEVILLE HALL.

Now, what I am going to tell you is true, though you may think it a lie. So if you don't like strange truths you had better skip it.

There was a Muniment room at Mandeville Hall, filled with what, to you, would seem musty old papers, but which would make the mouth of the Master of the Rolls water. There were no Anglo-Saxon charters as we had at Halfacre Hall, but there were numberless old Norman deeds which had belonged to Mandeville Abbey, of which you may still see the ruins about a mile and a half from Mandeville Hall. So when you find Mandeville Hall, in Warwickshire, you will not be long in stumbling on the Abbey. I regret to say that the Mandeville who built the hall was a time-server. He was Catholic and Protestant by turns, just as bluff Harry willed it. The wits of those days called him 'the Warwickshire weather-cock.' The result was that he got a grant of the Abbey lands, and pulled the Abbey itself down

for the sake of the lead. He was very nearly coming to a bad end in Bloody Mary's time, for he was silly enough to turn out his men for the Lady Jane, and had to pay a heavy fine to the Queen before he could get his pardon, which is still to be seen among the Mandeville manuscripts, under the Queen's great seal. There were deeds signed by Sir Thomas Lucy, and who knows if the deeds were properly searched, whether the very inquisition before that shallow knight who drove Shakespeare to London may not still be found. Besides papers and parchments there were old pictures of ancestors, which after the usual course of promotion and degradation which befalls family portraits, after being hung in hall, library, gallery, and bedroom, at last find their way into lumber rooms, their frames, alas! being wanted for a new generation. One day when I was a freshman at Oxford, I went with my Aunt into the Muniment room to hunt for some lease, and while she was busy looking for it, I amused myself with the pictures. They were all rolled up, and docketed at the back with the names of those whom they represented. This was Sir Giles, Sir Hugh, Sir John. Then as knights' banneret dropped out, and the family fortunately escaped the disgrace of a baronetcy, it was Squire this and Squire that, or Mistress

Ursula, Eleanor, or Mary. After I had turned over a good many, and raised dust enough to make us almost swallow at one dose that peck of dirt which we are told we must all eat before we die, I was just going to leave off, as my Aunt's search was nearly over, when I saw a roll which had a larger docket than the rest, and so I thought I would just look at that too. The docket read rather strangely, 'This is the portrait of the "White Lady," cut from the frame by me, John Mandeville, January 3rd, 1716.'

'What White Lady?' I asked of my Aunt. 'Who was the "White Lady?"'

'Never mind, child,' said my Aunt rather sharply for her, 'unroll her and let us look at her.'

I did as she bade me, and unrolled the picture. It was a portrait by Vandyck or one of his pupils, excellently painted not merely in hands, but in head and face. A three-quarters length, with a child clinging to her in the right-hand corner of the picture and seemingly cut in half.

'What an awkward picture, Aunt Mandeville! The figures look as if they were cut in half.'

'Yes!' said my Aunt, now in her quiet way; 'Yes! but see how beautiful she was; what hair,

what eyes, what a skin, and what a sad, mournful, wild look she has! Roll her up at once. I do not wish to see her again.'

Then I prayed for the picture. 'If it is such a good picture, Auntie, what a shame to cut it from the frame! Why did John Mandeville cut it from the frame, I wonder?'

'Ah!' almost sighed my Aunt, 'why did he cut her from her frame? but as you seem taken with the picture we will have her lined and re-framed, and she shall be hung up in the hall.'

So we had her lined and framed, and hung her up in the hall, opposite to the entrance.

I used to spend all my vacations with my Aunt, and very happy we were together. I think there was scarce a watering-place in England—she did not much care for foreign travel—that I have not visited with her, either as boy or man. She longed for the sea, and would even go to Cornwall in the winter, and to Wales in the spring, taking a regiment of servants with her, much to the indignation of Brooks, who complained that 'at them sea-side places' he could never get his meals 'comfortable or regular.'

But these sea-side rushes were one of the things that my Aunt insisted on. Once out of her park she had a will of her own in domestic matters. She ceased to be a Mandeville, and was

again a Halfacre; and well for her it was so, or else she would have been worried to death by old Brooks.

Well, the long vacation after we found the White Lady, my Aunt, did what she never had done before, and what she never did again. When she went away to the sea she lent Mandeville Hall to Sir Benjamin Bullion, her London banker. The Mandevilles had banked with the Bullions ever since there was banking in England. The first Bullion was a rival of that Duncombe of whom Pope sung contemptuously; but in spite of Pope's satire I would sooner be a live lord at Helmsly and Rievaulx than a dead poet. The Bullions had not done so well as the Duncombes. They rather messed matters in the South Sea Bubble, but still they had done pretty well. When their wills were proved they made half the millionaires in London die of envy, and had they lived in the days of succession duty they would have contributed thousands upon thousands to the revenue. They were stupid, short-necked, and prosy, as befitted bankers. They never speculated and never allowed interest on deposits, and that was why the Mandevilles banked on them. One of the few things remembered as having been said by the late Mr. Mandeville was, 'Never bank with a

banker who allows you interest on your balance; it always means speculation and bad security.'

I don't quite know how it happened, but the chief cashier of the bank, in corresponding on business with my Aunt about some investment of her savings said, 'Our Sir Benjamin is not so well as we could wish. The constant efflux of gold to the continent worries him, and he is getting thin. I wish he would take a holiday.'

Strange to say, for a woman so cold to all the world, except to me, Aunt Mandeville sympathised with the banker; and when the investment was made on the unerring advice of Sir Benjamin, she wrote him a kind letter, and said that if he chose to come down to Mandeville Hall with his establishment it was quite at his service. 'A Postscript added, 'We shall be away all September and part of October at Scarborough, and you will find excellent partridge-shooting at Mandeville Hall.'

I believe that P.S. decided Sir Benjamin. He accepted the invitation, and as soon as my Aunt was gone with her establishment he succeeded her with his. I think I am right when I say that there was not one servant left in the house.

'Well! we went to Scarborough; and very happy we were for those two months. My Aunt

was not only fond of the sea, but she loved to be on it. We hired a yacht, the only drawback to which was that we could never get the master —whom we hired, too, with his crew—to set the gaff topsail. That he was quite right was proved by what we heard afterwards, but what no one told us, though every one in Scarborough knew it, that whenever that yacht set her gaff-topsail she capsized. However, we knew nothing of that; our grievance was that we could never get the gaff-topsail up, and we were a living proof that it is better to have a grievance than to surmount it and perish in consequence. Then, too, we went to Whitby, and to Holy Island; passed Flamborough Head, then noisy with the gulls, which the cockney sportsman had not yet shot off, and which I sincerely hope Mr. Sykes' Bill may restore. Standing too close in we ran on Filey Brigg, and very nearly went to the bottom, but the master managed to get the *Petrel* —that was her name—off, after bumping a little upon the rocks.

Just before we left Scarborough, my Aunt, who had been wondering why she had not heard from Sir Benjamin, received a very mysterious letter from him, informing her that he had returned to town, and that when she came back to Mandeville Hall he would be glad if she would

allow him to come down and see her for a day.

‘I can’t make out what he means,’ said my Aunt, as she threw the letter over to me; ‘but I shall write and tell him to come and stay as long as he likes.’

We returned to Mandeville Hall, and as Claw, Tooth, and Nail would have said, ‘duly notified’ to Sir Benjamin that my Aunt was at home again, and would be happy to see him. He fixed the day, and came.

I recollect him well. He was a most prosaic man, quite above telling a story, and quite incapable of a joke. I remember he told us that he had never dreamt in his life. Fancy a man who has never dreamt! why, even dogs dream. Look at a sleeping dog. Let him lie; let him sleep his sleep out, and then say that he doesn’t dream!

Well, this truthful, dreamless man sat down to dinner with us, clothed and in his right mind. I remember we dined in the Hall, with the banners fluttering, and the family portraits looking down on our meal. After dinner, when even Brooks had betaken himself to his pantry, or wherever else he abided, Sir Benjamin, clearing his throat, said to my Aunt:

‘Something happened during my visit here,

Mrs. Mandeville, with which I think it my duty to make you acquainted.'

Here he paused, and my Aunt, rather fluttered, said :

'Indeed, Sir Benjamin! what was it? Nothing about the game, I hope. We always follow our own birds on Lord Lurdane's land, and his lordship does the same on ours. But I daresay it was something about bushing the fields, which the tenants are bound to do ; or was it the foxes, or the rabbits?'

She would have run over the whole litany of landlord and tenant, and pursued the irrepressible rabbit even into his burrow, had not Sir Benjamin, in his slow, heavy way, checked her by saying :

'I can assure you, Mrs. Mandeville, it was nothing that arose out of game. The shooting, both partridge, pheasant, and rabbit, was most excellent ; and as for hares, I never saw so many anywhere.'

'What was it then?' said my Aunt, who began to grow impatient.

'You shall hear,' said Sir Benjamin, and then he went on : 'You are aware, Mrs. Mandeville, that you were good enough to leave us the house entirely empty. I do not mean, of course, empty of furniture, but of servants. It was an act of

great consideration, for the servants of two establishments seldom agree, and ours were, so to speak, left *carte blanche*.'

What he understood by *carte blanche* I am sure I can't tell, but those were the very words he used. 'There could therefore be no collusion or deception played by one set of servants on the other, and, as utter strangers, of course our servants were ignorant of the story of this house.'

'Proceed,' said my Aunt, who seemed quite at a loss to understand the drift of Sir Benjamin's observations.

'As we are few in family,' continued Sir Benjamin, 'and you had not fettered me by any prohibition, I thought I would ask my friend Blogg, a Russian merchant of great standing and integrity, the best judge of bristles and tallow on change, and a man whose word would pass for thousands even without a crossed cheque drawn to order ——'

My Aunt was so bewildered with tallow, bristles, and crossed cheques, that she could only bow acquiescence—an act which she mechanically performed.

'Mr. Blogg accepted my invitation;—he is a first-rate shot, besides his knowledge of his business,—put himself into the *Highflyer*, and arrived here in time for dinner. As our side of

the house, up those stairs yonder, was full, we put Mr. Blogg into one of the State rooms,—into Queen Elizabeth's room, in fact,—and after a pleasant evening, Mr. Blogg confessed that he was very tired, and went to bed. I went myself with him to his room to see that it was comfortable; and as it seemed not to have been tenanted for some time, we had a fire lighted in the large grate, and when it burned up, we left my friend. I may mention here that Mr. Blogg is a man of undaunted courage; witness his buying ten thousand casks of yellow candle at fifty-six and sixpence for delivery in the very height of the tallow panic at the end of the Crimean War. That bold step checked the disastrous fall in Russian tallow, and saved hundreds of families from ruin. I have heard him also say that he has seen ten men flogged to death with the knout in Russia without feeling faint.

‘Well! I left my friend and retired to rest with Lady Bullion. Let me say it was at the full of the moon. When I was shaving in the morning,’—here Sir Benjamin felt his massive chin, which was firmly seated on a dewlap of which any cow might have been proud,—‘I was surprised, I may say amazed, to see my friend Blogg walking in the garden in front of the Hall.

‘As I felt sure that he could not have rested

well, I sent down my valet with an inquiry after my friend's health, and to my surprise he came back and said that Mr. Blogg had sent for a fly, saying that he would not re-enter the house.

'I reflected whether Mr. Blogg had been seized with sudden mania, but there was nothing in the condition either of the bristle or of the oil and tallow markets to warrant that conclusion; I therefore sent back the valet with a request that Mr. Blogg would at least enter the house to take his morning meal, and that I would be down in a few minutes. To my great satisfaction I saw that he had entered the house, and hastily finishing my toilet I went downstairs; but on my way down, on looking through the window, I saw that he was again walking in the garden, though his breakfast was smoking on the table.

'I ran—with some sacrifice of self-respect I own—but I ran into the garden, and seizing him by the arm, I said, "Good God, Blogg, are you mad? Why will you not eat your breakfast as a Christian and a merchant ought? Be a man, Blogg," for I felt something dreadful had befallen him. To tell you the truth, I thought that the Czar of all the Russias had issued a Ukase forbidding for fourteen years the export of tallow, hemp, hides, and bristles, a tyrannical exercise of authority which I knew by the state of his

balance, and the bills "maturing," as we term it, could have caused my friend to suspend.'

'Do you mean he would have hanged himself here at Mandeville Hall?' asked my Aunt with an anxious jealousy for the reputation of the Hall.

'No! no!' said Sir Benjamin, 'not so bad as that. By suspend, I mean stop payment; in other words, become a bankrupt. But to proceed: Mr. Blogg turned sharply round on me and said, "Nothing will induce me to enter that house again. I had hardly set my foot in the Hall, when I saw *her* again."' "

'*Her*,' said my Aunt, whose interest increased now that the story had passed from the domain of Ukases on tallow and bristles—'*Her*! whom do you mean, Sir Benjamin?'

'That lady yonder,' said the baronet, pointing to 'the Lady in White,' with the rueful countenance, whom we had only a little while before restored to the light of day.

'That lady yonder, and if you will let me go on, I will tell you all about it, for I would not leave Mr. Blogg, or suffer him to go, till he had told me all that had happened.

'Mr. Blogg said that when we had left him in Queen Elizabeth's room, he had undressed himself as quickly as he could and gone to bed. Though the fire was burning bright he was soon

asleep. How long he had been asleep he could not tell, but he suddenly awoke, and saw by the low light of the embers a female figure in white crossing the room, past the fireplace and bedside. She moved slowly, and as she went she wrung her hands, and he saw that the expression of her face was full of grief and sorrow. She passed slowly on towards the dressing-room, and opened the door into it. It closed after her, and she was lost to view. I have said that Mr. Blogg is a man of great nerve. He said that he was not at all alarmed at what he saw, thinking it was some maid-servant walking in her sleep, or some one trying to frighten him. But as he lay there, the father of a family, he thought of Mrs. Blogg in Barnsbury Park, and the seven little Bloggs, and he felt it behoved him not to permit a strange female to stay any longer in his dressing-room. You are aware, I conclude,' continued Sir Benjamin, 'that there is no exit from that dressing-room, except the door at which the figure entered. The window, too, is bricked up to more than the stature of the human figure, so that it was plain that the female must still be in the dressing-room. Mr. Blogg waited a minute or two longer. He then rose, lighted a candle, and proceeded to the dressing-room. He entered it and saw—nothing. He hunted and searched everywhere,

and still found—nothing. There were no cupboards, no hiding-places, no exit. Mr. Blogg was more than ever amazed. Having satisfied himself on all these points, he retired again to his bed, but not to sleep. He had not been five minutes in bed ere—here Sir Benjamin grew slightly poetic—‘ere the same female figure re-appeared through the dressing-room door, and passed slowly out of the bedroom, wringing her hands and seeming to weep as she went. As she passed the bedside, she stood still for a moment and looked hard at Mr. Blogg with such a woe-begone face that he said it would melt a heart of stone into a heart of tallow.

‘When this apparition—for such Mr. Blogg firmly believed it to have been—departed, Mr. Blogg lay tossing about for two or three hours; he then fell into a fitful slumber, waking every now and then with a start. As soon as day dawned—it was about the equinox—he rose and dressed himself. He then descended into the garden and ordered the fly to take him to Warwick that he might catch the *Highflyer*. The strangest thing of all, though, was what happened when he re-entered the Hall to partake of his breakfast. The very first object that his eyes fell on was that portrait yonder, which he is ready to swear is the portrait of the woeful lady

in white whom he saw in Queen Elizabeth's room.

'This, Mrs. Mandeville, is my story. I have thought it right, in justice to Mr. Blogg and myself, to put you in possession of these facts, to the truth of which Mr. Blogg is ready to depose on oath before the Lord Mayor or any two Justices of the Peace ; and, having said so much, I leave the matter in your hands.'

'Very strange, Sir Benjamin, very strange!' said my Aunt, as though musing and recalling in a dream something that had happened long ago. Then awaking as it were, she said in a louder tone, and in her best company manner :

'Thank you, Sir Benjamin. This story must be inquired into, and when you go back to town pray tell Mr. Blogg that no exertion shall be spared on my part to punish those who have been guilty of playing such a hoax upon him.'

'But,' rejoined the banker, 'Mr. Blogg is ready to affirm the truth of what he saw. He altogether denies that there was any deception.'

'Well!' said my Aunt, 'I can do no more than say what I have said. Every exertion shall be made, and if anything is discovered, it shall be communicated to Mr. Blogg ; and now, Sir Benjamin, I think we had better go to bed. You will be on our side of the house. You need not fear

that we shall put you into Queen Elizabeth's room. Good-night;' and with these words she retired to rest, and we soon followed her example.

Now whether Sir Benjamin slept soundly that night, all I know is, I did not. I lay tossing about *à la Blogg*, thinking about the ghost, which, begging its pardon, seemed to go so thoroughly on all fours. Nor was I altogether easy about my Aunt's manner. I remember that her behaviour was rather odd when we first found 'the White Lady,' and what she said, when Sir Benjamin had ended his long-winded story, seemed to show a determination on her part not to allow the question of a ghost at Mandeville Hall to be so much as raised, and a foregone conclusion against all the evidence adduced, or offered to be adduced, by the unhappy Blogg.

Next day Sir Benjamin took his leave. He had come down at great inconvenience to tell us the story, which, as he justly said, was far too long to write, and my Aunt ought to have been much obliged to him. Still, though she was civility itself, I could see she was heartily glad when we heard his carriage-wheels rolling off.

When he was gone I thought Aunt Mandeville would have returned to the ghost in Queen Elizabeth's room, but she made no mention of the subject. She went, indeed, all alone into the

Muniment room where we had found the picture, one day when I was out shooting, and had, as Brooks called it, 'a great rummage among them parchments,' but still never a word of Mr. Blogg's story. At last, after a week had passed, and it was within a day of my return to Oxford I summoned up courage after dinner, and said :

'I wish so much, Auntie, you would tell me what you think of Mr. Blogg's ghost.'

'It will be quite time enough to talk of Mr. Blogg's ghost,' replied my Aunt, still fencing with me, 'when Mr. Blogg is dead and buried. At present any discussion as to his ghost is premature.'

'No! but, Auntie, you know very well I mean the ghost that Mr. Blogg said he saw—"the White Lady." The picture too, and the likeness which he saw in it to the ghost, how do you explain that away; and John Mandeville's docket too, why did he cut the White Lady's picture out of its frame, in 1716? and why did he roll her up, and stow her away in the Muniment room?'

'Child,' said my Aunt, very slowly and distinctly, 'there is a ghost that is said to haunt Queen Elizabeth's room, but it is so long since any one saw it that no one in the house except me knows of it—not even Brooks, who thinks he knows everything about Mandeville Hall. When I was first married I remember I wanted to change

our sleeping-rooms from the side on which they now are, and which, as you know, looks north to the Still rooms, which look south. I thought them lighter and warmer, though the furniture and fittings are gloomy enough. My husband refused, and would give no reason for a long time. When I pressed him, he said he wasn't going to sleep in a ghost's room, and to have the White Lady looking in upon him at night. He would tell me no more, but said if I chose to look into a drawer in a cabinet in the Muniment room, I would find John Mandeville's diary—the same Mandeville, no doubt, who cut the picture out which now hangs up there in the Hall. You may think it odd, but from that day till the other day. I never cared to look for John Mandeville's diary. I do not think I even remembered where it was when we found the picture, though one would have thought that fact would have recalled it to my memory. I had always a vague apprehension of putting any visitor into that room, and I do not think it has been occupied ten times in the last forty years. I never put any one into it during my widowhood, till this London banker comes and puts the best judge of bristles on Change into the room, and lo! this prosaic man sees the ghost, and recognises her picture. It is certainly very odd.'

‘But have you seen John Mandeville’s diary now, Auntie?’ I asked, for I felt sure that was what she had been ‘rummaging for,’ to use Brooks’s elegant phrase, while I was out pheasant-shooting.

‘Yes, I have, child,’ said my Aunt. ‘Here it is.’ As she said this she took a few sheets of yellow-looking paper out of her Davenport table, and began :

“Sept. 20, 1715,—the full of the Moone. On this night ye White Lady, my great great grandmother, Lucy Mandeville, was seen by General Tryon in ye Queen’s room. She came weeping and wailing to his bed, and soe passed into the side-roome and disappeared. N.B. There is no exit from the side-roome, and it is wall’d up at ye windowe.’

“The General was exceeding scared, and was for flying ye hall. Hee was persuaded to remaine by ye promise of another sleeping roome.’

“This Lucy Mandeville was an Ogle, and lived very unhappie with my great great grandfather temp. Jacobi 1^{mi}. She killed her childe in the side-roome, and threw itt oute of the windowe, which was since wall’d up. She then drown’d herselfe inn ye moate.”’

‘That is one entry. Here is another which answers to the docket on the portrait.

“*Jan. 3, 1715 / 16, N.S. — On this daye, I John Mandeville did, with mine own hand, cut out off its frame, the portrait of Lucy Mandeville, my great great grandmother, and did put itt away oute of sighte in ye Muniment chamber, that itt might not hange in ye halle with ye other portraits.*”

‘There you have it all chapter and verse in John Mandeville’s writing, and I must say,’ said my Aunt, ‘that I have now a firmer belief in the reality of the White Lady, and in Mr. Blogg’s story than I ever had before.’

‘It was odd, too, Auntie, that old Blogg saw her at the full of the moon in September, 183—, and that John Mandeville puts an entry into this diary that she appeared in September, 1715, at the full of the moon.’

‘Very odd,’ said my Aunt. ‘It all puts me in mind of what Chief Justice Earwig said when he was past eighty—when was it? The last time I dined at Whitley when he was down for the Warwick Assizes, that the evidence in some ghost stories—the Airlie Drummer for instance, the Sherbrooke Ghost, and the Brown Lady of Rainham, the Townshend Ghost,—was in every case such as would be received in a Court of Law. I think our Mandeville Ghost would match any of them; and, as you say, Lucy Mande-

ville's apparitions go on all-fours. Strange times these when an old family ghost takes it into her head to appear to a stolid tallow and bristle-merchant, and not to one of her old stock.'

'Yes! but then, Auntie, you must remember that none of the old stock sleep in Queen Elizabeth's room, but if I had been sharp I might have known the hall was haunted, for when I first went to school, Deepdale, one of the boys, taunted me with your living alone with the Ghost in Mandeville Hall.'

'The Deepdales were always unmannerly, and worse,' said my Aunt dryly. There is an entry in John Mandeville's Diary very much to the point. Here it is:

"*July 30, Anno 1720.*—Mr. Deepdale, the antiquary, did come over to look at ye manuscripts in ye Muniment roome. On taking leave he did beg ye loane of ye Foundation Charter of Mandeville Abbey, by ye Empresse Maude, which I willingly granted.. I trust hee will soone restore itt."

'Then, "*1722, April 2.*—I did see Mr. Deepdale at ye Warwick Sessions, and did presse him to restore ye Foundation Deede of ye Empresse Maude, and hee made answer that he had taken itt to London as a greate rarity to shoue to his friende Sir Robert Cotton." That deed, Edward,

was never restored. It is not among our muni-ments, and is no doubt still among the MSS. in the Cottonian Collection at the British Museum.'

So there were Auntie and I at Mandeville Hall, and Blogg and Bullion in London, in possession of a ghost story; what Blogg and Bullion would do with it, remained to be seen; but my Aunt Mandeville's course was clear. She resolved to keep Blogg's story a strict secret from Brooks and the other servants, and trusted that the unhappy Russian merchant would keep his story to himself for fear of being thought ridiculous on Change.

CHAPTER XVI.

HOW THINGS WENT AT MANDEVILLE HALL.

TIME rolled on, and I was now twenty. I scarcely remember what happened to me between eighteen and twenty. Happy the boyhood the annals of which are dull. In mine were few events. Every now and then would come letters from my mother, showing that my father was sinking deeper and deeper into the Great Dismal Swamp. The slaves had passed from apprenticeship to complete freedom, for which they were about as fit as children to keep house. In any temperate clime they would have been forced to work for existence, but in the West Indies a man can sit down for a month and supply himself with food by mere tickling the soil with a hoe for half-a-day. Then, too, wife-working is a great institution, especially for a negro, and very often the men did no work at all, but made their wives put in their provisions. As for the children, negroes were never very good fathers or mothers.

They were as the hen pheasants who are above hatching their own eggs, and must have Dorking hens to take the labour off their hands. The fine ladies of ornithology, they bring up their children by the help of others. In the case of the negroes this was an evil inherited from the old system. The slaves were so accustomed to see their children taken care of from their birth at the pains and expense of the proprietor, that they altogether neglected the duties of parents.

Of course, this dry-nursing by the owner ceased with slavery ; but the habits of a century cannot be made to cease by Act of Parliament. The owners were unable to take care of the children, and the parents would not. The consequence was the children died fast ; and mere pity, on our estate, fed children who, like the pheasants to which I have compared them, flew away to other woods when full fledged, and never did a day's work ! When my father called a meeting of his people, and explained to them that the proprietors, for a variety of reasons, could not now undertake the expense of a doctor, and hospital, and nursery for the children, the negroes were reasonable enough in speech, and said :

‘No, Massa, dat nebber do. Massa Halfacre can nebber nurse all dese piccaninny.’

‘Who, then, is to do it ?’

‘Oh! Massa, dey born gentlemen, dey support demselves.’

As for John, my eldest brother, he was in London, eating his terms, and the younger children had been sent home to a private school. Not to Dr. Cutbrush; he had been prematurely cut off at seventy, as his tombstone said, ‘by the bursting of a blood-vessel in the midst of a career of usefulness, thus affording a melancholy example of the incertitude of existence, even when its prolongation seems most desirable.’

The fact was that across one of Dr. Cutbrush’s fields ran a footpath. Many a time have I seen the worthy Doctor in chase of little boys who strayed from the footpath in spite of an elaborate notice which said that ‘trespassers would be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law.’ If he caught them, he added the vigour of his birch-hardened arm to the rigour of the law. He either caned or boxed the ears of the offenders; and if they pleaded that they could not read the notice, he boxed their ears still more to encourage them to learn to read. In these days he would have been summoned for an assault by the village attorney. But those were the days of universal ear-boxing, and hair and ear-pulling, and what would be an aggravated assault now would then have seemed to

a passer-by the most natural thing in the world. Boxing on the ears and caning little boys were like hanging for sheep-stealing, bleeding, and calomel, and flogging in the army, and bull-baiting, and cock-shying, and a host of other brutal, drastic things, which were then done every day, and at which no one was shocked, because they were done every day, had been done every day, and, it was supposed, would be done every day for all time. We now look back at them in their true light, and see how shocking some of them at least were.

But to return to Dr. Cutbrush, and the manner of his end. On that fatal day he was eagerly chasing two little boys across the field, they having trespassed in search of wild-flowers. Cane in hand, he had all but reached them, and they were shrinking away in fear of the dreaded stroke. The stroke came, but it alighted on Dr. Cutbrush. He was smitten by apoplexy, and fell forward, his outstretched cane just grazing the back of the hindmost boy. They turned round as they heard the dull thud of the fall, and saw the Doctor with distorted features stretched before them. They cried for help, and help came. They carried him home. The Doctor Mindererus of the village was in attendance. They tried to breathe a vein, but it was

no use. The Doctor had passed to other fields, across which, let us hope, there are no footpaths, but rights of way everywhere.

My Aunt and I were the best friends in the world. She was as jealous as ever, and as devoted as ever. I had no will but hers, nor did I wish for any other. What did we do? Oh! we restored the chapel, and made it more ecclesiastical. In doing so we had to take up the pavement, and the workmen broke into the Mandeville vault, and Auntie and I went down one bright afternoon, and saw all the old Mandevilles since the Mandeville who was fined one thousand marks by King Henry VII. The earlier Mandeville muniments were in a sad state of desecration amongst the Abbey ruins. But here was John Mandeville, the Trimmer and Turncoat, lying in a sadly crushed coffin between his two wives, and a whole row of little coffins containing the Mandeville windfalls of two or three generations, the untimely fruit of the family, packed up upon him. Do you fancy the dead lie still and quiet in their coffins—that it is all one dead level in the grave? Alas! you had only to step down into that Mandeville vault, to see that there are ups and downs beyond the grave, just as there are in daily life. Here was a father crushed by the weight of his children and grandchildren. The stoutest elm and

the toughest lead could not stand the burden of three generations of babies. That Mandeville was crushed as flat as a pancake, his poor old bones protruding from the riven lead and rotten wood, one arm thrust out, as though warning his descendants against early marriages and hosts of children. Too truly was typified in that coffin the fate of a family estate ruined by the charges entailed on it by three wives and twenty children. Another coffin stood on end, as though, impatient of death, it had edged its way toward the gate of the vault, and sidled itself off the coffin on which it had been reverently laid, till it slipped down with a crash of grave dust, and remained with its heels in the air. Idle ambition, that of a corpse craving for the light of day!—restless body that longed to follow the spirit whithersoever the spirit had flown!

Some were stripped of their velvet and brass mouldings and handles, shorn of honour and distinction, even among their dead fellows. Horny-fisted undertakers and rude labourers had so-treated them to make a nice resting-place for the last new comer. Others lay as it were quiet and comfortable, side by side. Well-behaved coffins, keeping up appearances even in that sad vault, where the spade and mattock were the sole authority.

We read some of the plates—the earliest being, strange to say, more legible than the later inscriptions. That Trimmer's plate, which recited all his honours, was as plain as the first day it had been nailed on. Among others that we read was this, in which we both took a strange interest :

‘Lucy Mandeville, deceased at the full of ye moone, Sept. 16th, Anno Dom. 1620, buried at midnight Sept. 20th.’

And above her lay a little coffin with this inscription :

‘Arthur Mandeville, sonne of Lucy Mandeville, born 1616, buried at midnight Sept. 20th, 1620.’

We felt a flutter at this fresh proof of the truth of John Mandeville's diary. Here before us lay all that was left of Lucy Mandeville, ‘the White Lady,’ and of her child, both buried at midnight, four days after their death.

We had seen enough. My Aunt had the vault carefully repaired, and she never entered it again till she joined the rest of the family in their last long sleep.

What else did we do? We cut down some of the old trees where they were too thick, and planted thousands of new ones. We were, in truth, rather over-treed, but my Aunt used to boast that time

out of mind there had never been an oak felled to pay a debt on the Mandeville estate. I am afraid our hedgerows showed very bad farming, our fields were too small, and we had no leases—only yearly tenants; but then the same tenants went on from father to son, and hardly one of those was ever ejected, except by death. The result was that we had a set of tenants with very little capital, who could afford to lay very little out on the land, and several of them were childless widows, who had been persuaded by my Uncle, and after him my Aunt, to let them stay on at the old farm where their husbands had lived and died. Some of them were very good farmers—equal to any man, but some of them were very bad. Then the farms were too small. Modern farming would have levelled their fences, cut down the oaks and elms—whether free-standing or in the hedgerows—thrown several farms into one, and given twenty-one years' leases. We should thus have raised our rents, and our tenants would have been men of capital, not afraid to lay out their money on the land.

But our farming was not modern farming. If there was anything that Aunt Mandeville hated more than another, it was an improved agricultural implement. Reaping and thrashing machines were to her as shepherds to the old Egyp-

tians. She could not away with them. I think the chief reason why she so detested Claw, Tooth, and Nail, was because of their improved sugar machinery. What she would have done had she lived till now, and been forced to go to the Agricultural Show at Birmingham, and seen steam-ploughs, scarifiers, clod-crushers, and all their kind, I cannot tell. She always said when advised to pursue a different system with her tenants: 'I prefer to keep them as they are. I think it the duty of a landlord to grow men as well as corn.' She paid her labourers well, and built them good but not architectural cottages; but I am not at all sure that with all her liberal ideas she would not have much preferred them if they could not read and write. She often said, Book-learning was like letting out water, you could never tell where it would stop. Reading was not bad, a little of it, and writing and arithmetic the same; but when she heard some philosopher say he hoped the day would come that the man who broke stones by the roadside would be a good mathematician, she dryly said: 'But not a good stone-breaker, and in this stiff soil we need stones on our roads more than Euclid in our cottages.'

Perhaps there are some still left who may think Aunt Mandeville was right. But, right or wrong,

she would have her way, and she liked far more to see the boys and girls playing on the village green, than to go to the school and hear them droning out their lessons on Bell's system.

Then we restored the church. We thought we had done it very nicely, and it was one of the first 'restorations' in the district; but I lately heard that 'the Ecclesiological Society of Mercia' had made an excursion to Mandeville Church, and drawn up a report in which they expressed their dissatisfaction of the utterly uneclesiastical way in which the restoration of twenty-five years before had been carried out. Amongst other things, they said that 'the remains of the rood screen bearing traces of a crucifix, had been removed, and that a double piscina, mentioned by Dugdale in his *Monasticon*, had disappeared.'

But what they 'felt bound to protest against more than anything else was that the hideous and post-Reformation practice of "pues"—that was the way they spelt 'pews'—'had been retained;' and they especially criticised 'the green baize "pue" of the Mandevilles,' in which the family had been wont to show themselves at church for generations.

'What made this puing more deplorable,' they went on to say, was 'that under the pues several brasses were concealed. Three of them of ecclesi-

astics in cope, stole, chasuble, and amice,—invaluable examples of ecclesiastical vestments, which were thus lost to the religious world by the selfishness of the family.'

These were very hard words for my poor Aunt, who did her very best for the rickety old edifice, which, till then, was as cold and comfortless as a barn. I have often observed that good old churches, like very good people, have a way of being very cold to their visitors. My Aunt had made this church as warm and snug as possible.

Old Betty Briggs said, 'There bean't no more rheumatics, Master Edward, in church since Lady Mandeville done up the church.'

My Aunt also had it drained and white-washed; and I am sorry to say that a very lanky figure of a giant, which was faintly visible among the damp, green plaster near the door, and which the village boys called 'Long Tom of Coventry'—a relation, I suppose, of Peeping Tom—altogether disappeared in the operation. I little expected to see my friend 'Long Tom' reappear after so many years.

'We are informed,' says an appendix to the report, headed *Frescoes in Mandeville Church*, 'by the Rev. Dr. Thurifer, Priest of the Church of the Immaculate Conception at Dumbleton, that, before the late so-called "restoration,"

there was a splendid fresco of Saint Christopher bearing the infant Jesus, and above them the figure of the ever blessed Virgin standing on a crescent. Out of the mouth of the Saviour proceeded the legend, "Ave Maria, mater purissima, stella maris." . . . The rest of the inscription was unfortunately covered by a Protestant slab, bearing the following inscription :—

Sacred to the Memory
OF
EBENEZER BIGGS,
FORTY YEARS STEWARD
AT
MANDEVILLE HALL.
THIS STONE WAS ERECTED TO A FAITHFUL SERVANT
BY
JOHN MANDEVILLE, ESQ.,
OF MANDEVILLE HALL.
BORN MARCH 1, 1670. DIED JULY 22, 1750.

‘We grieve to state that the whole of this most interesting mural painting, which no doubt dates from the early part of thirteenth century, judging by the character of the writing, perished in the so-called restoration in the year 183—.’

I am inclined to think it better that St. Christopher, or Long Tom of Coventry, should perish together with the parish rheumatism at once and for ever, so far as its being caught at

church was concerned, than that he should continue to sprawl over the wall, green with the accumulated damp of centuries.

No doubt, if Aunt Mandeville had lived a quarter of a century later, she would have done her restoration better, and perhaps the report would have been less severe ; but one thing I am sure she would have clung to had she been alive, and that was her pew. A church without a pew ! Free seats ! Every beggar sitting next to you, and elbowing you out of your own seat ! That was an equality and fraternity which her liberalism never contemplated. I think I see her now in her bonnet, which was neither large nor small, a real bonnet, not one of these strings and roses which are now called bonnets ; still less a hat—how she would have hated hats !—with her glossy hair braided over her white marble brow, and her brown eyes sparkling when the choir sang well, sitting up as straight as an arrow, with her Bible on the desk before her, in her great green baize pew, nearly in front of the pulpit, and listening to the sermon, which she never failed to criticise if it was dull or over long. Once when a clergyman came to the Hall on a visit and offered to preach for the rector, old Brooks leant over him at dinner, as soon as he heard the offer made to the rector, and whispered :

‘Above all things, Mr. Mazzard, Mrs. Mandeville dislikes a long sermon.’

What the said Mazzard thought of this confidential communication I don’t know. Perhaps he thought Brooks was a Jesuit in the family, the keeper of my Aunt’s conscience, and quite entitled to address him on the subject; but, whatever he thought, I am sure, if his discourse sinned either in prosiness or length, he would be sure to hear of it from Aunt Mandeville.

CHAPTER XVII.

HOW WE WENT TO ILFRACOMBE.

My last Long Vacation at Oxford had now come. Next term I was to pass my examination for my last go, and to put on my bachelor's gown, and after residing one more term to leave the university. I was quite ready for the examination, and troubled my head little about it. I had not been altogether idle, in spite of the scene I have related about Æschylus and 'alas! alas!' 'ah me! ah me!' As usual, I was to be with my Aunt at the sea. It was two years I think after she lent Mandeville Hall to Sir Benjamin Bullion, and—excuse the expression,—brought the ghost to life again. Perhaps you will wonder, undergraduates of 'the House,' and fathers whose sons those undergraduates are, why I did not go to Nova Zembla, or the Faroe Islands, or Sicily, or some such quiet out-of-the-way place on a reading party. For two reasons; one because I had no faith in reading parties, which as often as not end in dead plucks; and, secondly, because I was

not silly or stupid enough to read with a tutor through the Long Vacation for a common pass. Perhaps it would have been better for me if I had gone anywhere else but where I did go, and that was to Ilfracombe with my Aunt. Those reasons apart, I am sure she would never have suffered me to be away three months from her ; she would have been afraid that I might become fonder of some one else than of her. Not that she even allowed herself to imagine that I could be in love. She wished me to marry some one, but she did not wish me to be in love. No ! whether it was man or whether it was woman, she was afraid of all of them, and kept me with her lest I should love her less, and not do as she wished. Next to me, and perhaps before me, she loved the estate.

You will say, Aunt Mandeville was a most unreasonable woman ; but, reader, have you never met an unreasonable woman in your life ? And are you not an unreasonable man, if you are a man, to say such a thing of my Aunt ? Of course she was unreasonable ; most people are when they are very fond of another human being, and very jealous besides. If she had not loved me so much, she would not have been what you call so ‘unreasonable.’ It would have mattered little to her with whom I went to this place or that. She would

have said, 'It is quite natural that the boy should amuse himself in the company of young people of his own age;' but that was not the way in which Aunt Mandeville looked at the matter. I belonged to her. She never conquered the feeling that I was her property. I was all in all to her, and she wished me to be the same to her. 'We have one life, Edward,' she used to say; 'let us never part.' This was why I had so few friends, and why so few people came to see us at Mandeville Hall; there was no question, and could be no question, of my ever liking better to be with any one else than my Aunt Mandeville.

Among all the places which we had visited from year to year, it so happened we had never been to Ilfracombe. Then it was a place not so easy to get at by land, and to go by sea you had to sleep a night in Bristol or Clifton. Things may be better now. I have no doubt they are; but all I say is, then you had to sleep a night at either of those places. I say nothing more, out of respect to the feelings of the families of the former hotel-keepers, who, I hope, sleep as soundly, whether in their beds or in their graves, as we did not in the year 183—.

Well! we set off from Mandeville Hall. We posted along in a procession not unlike that famous one of my father in quest of the *Enchan-*

tress. My Aunt and I in a chariot, with Brooks, —the ever-inquisitive Brooks,—on the rumble. Then, in a sort of landau or berline, came my Aunt's maid, and the housekeeper, and the cook, and I believe an upper-housemaid. On the box were two footmen. Ever so many other servants, and a carriage and horses, had been sent round by land I don't know how far. The carriages in which we travelled were to be housed somewhere in Bristol, whence we were to go to Ilfracombe in a steamer, the first I think on which my Aunt had ever set her foot. After two days' posting we reached the town of Bath, and in due time Bristol. I purposely, for the reasons given above, refrain from saying where we put up in that ancient city; but I must add that when we woke up in the morning we might with justice have applied to Bristol what the traveller said of Stony Stratford. If you have forgotten the story, or never heard it, I pity you; I am not going to repeat it. I am also bound to say that the inmates of our beds had proved most impartial. My Aunt was a slight, tall woman, and her maid a short, squat figure; but both their faces looked as though they were recovering from the small-pox. So, too, I was slim and spare, Brooks stout and fat; but in each case our assailants had shown great impartiality of attack. Their plan

of operations was simple : it consisted in stinging us all over, so that, as Brooks said, with a face of scarlet :

‘ Master Edward, you couldn’t so much as lay a pin between the bites.’

Breakfast over, we hurried to the Quay under the Hot Wells, and there found the steamer *Diana* ready to start, blowing off her steam every now and then like a sea-horse. I am sure I don’t know if sea-horses do snort, except in poetry ; so, as this is a true story all in prose, you had better read grampus or porpoise for sea-horse, both of which mammals, as I well know, do snort and blow off their steam through their noses or spout-holes.

I handed my Aunt on board, and got her a good seat aft, not far from the companion. Brooks did the same for the upper servants, and the footman did the same for the maids. The luggage—what a pile of it!—was hardly on board, and covered with a tarpaulin, when a bell rang. ‘ Any more for the shore ?’ shouted the captain. A few friends of intending passengers hastened along the gangway, the hawser was loosed, and away went the *Diana*, on the top of the ebb tide, down the Avon under St. Vincent’s Rocks. I remember it was just about the time when the first bar of the present Suspension

Bridge had been laid across the Avon. I believe it was thought a wonderful thing then, just as the *Great Western's* feat in running across to New York under steam was thought a feat so bold as to be well-nigh impious! Well! we have done many more such 'impious' things since; and it will be well for us, here and hereafter, if we never do any more 'impious' things than steaming across the Atlantic.

As we ran down to Pyll, at the mouth of the Avon, we had time—those of us who had any eyes in their head—to see that it was blowing very hard, and that we were likely to have a rough passage. One is so landlocked going down the Avon that one can scarce feel how hard the wind blows; but still one may look out for squalls when one sees, as I saw, haycocks flying, and large limbs of trees cracking and splitting before the gale.

Even Brooks began to suspect something.

'See them haycocks yonder, and them boughs flying, Master Edward. Do you think we are going to have a storm?'

I have said that Aunt Mandeville was an excellent sailor, and as for me the entrails of Virgil's reapers on land were not more 'dour' than mine on sea.

'Storm, Brooks; I should think so. Have

you got your life-belt ready? You'll have to swim for it before the day is over—

‘Half o’er, half o’er, to Aberdour
Is forty fathoms deep,
And there lies Mr. Butler Brooks,
And all the housemaids at his feet.’

‘Oh! Mr. Edward, don’t be so unfeeling. I’m sure Mrs. Mandeville would be the last lady in the world to take her servants to sea in a storm. Think of Mrs. Brooks in Warwickshire, and the friends and sweethearts of them poor maids. Why not persuade the captain to turn back?’

‘You had better try, Brooks. Here he comes.’ As I said this the captain, a fine specimen of the British sailor, came up from his cabin, where he had gone for a minute to put on a souwester.

‘Oh, captain!’ said Mr. Brooks, ‘what do you think of the weather? Hadn’t we better turn back?’

‘Turn back!’ said the captain, with an expression which I had rather not repeat, but if it had been literally carried out would have placed Mr. Brooks in the position of Tobit. ‘Turn back! Why out of what Loo-nattic Assylum did you escape this morning, and where’s your keeper?’

‘Sir,’ said Mr. Brooks, his dignity getting the better of his fear, ‘you are quite mistaken. I have

escaped from no "Assylum," nor have I any keeper on board. I am as sane as you, and I only wished to know if it was quite safe to venture out to sea when the wind is so high. Mrs. Mandeville has a great objection to go to sea in a storm.'

'Then,' said the captain, 'if you are Mrs. Mandeville's keeper, may I ask why you let her come on board in a strong wind? Foul or fair, the *Diana* goes to sea, if you call a run down the North Devon coast "sea," which I don't.'

'Mrs. Mandeville is my missus ——' Brooks was beginning.

'May I axe your name? But I suppose it's Mandeville, as you say Mrs. Mandeville is your missus?'

'My name, captain!' said Brooks, with awful solemnity, speaking with minute guns, for all the world like the late Sir Robert Peel in a great debate; 'my name it is Brooks, which is not Mandeville; leastways, as I said before, Mrs. Mandeville is my missus.'

'If she's your missus, she ought to take better care on you, nor to let you make a fool of yourself, axing silly questions and stopping the working of the ship. But I've no time to listen to you.' Then to the man at the helm:

'Hard a starboard! Can't you see that

schooner?' Then, having dodged the coaster, close hauled on the starboard tack, and who, by rights, ought to have ported her helm, the captain bellowed out 'steady,' and the word being caught up and repeated by the man at the wheel, he dived down below again for a minute, leaving Mr. Brooks, very much discomfited, on deck.

'Steady, indeed,' said Brooks; 'call this steady,' as the *Diana*, who was a lively craft, began to lift and dip her nose in the sea. 'Call this "steady." Master Edward, do you call this "steady?" Cook, do you call this "steady?"' appealing to a heap of collapsed humanity which lay huddled up on a seat where the cook had sat in full-blown dignity ten minutes before. 'Steady!' he reiterated ruefully, as he leant his head over the side and made no vain oblation to the marine divinities.

Up to this time there had been really no sea at all. Brooks and the cook belonged to that class of persons who are sick before they put their foot in a boat. These are they who, in the upper classes, try all sorts of specifics against sea-sickness. Creosote, chloroform, chlorodyne, nux vomica, and arsenic, among the active remedies; and as mechanical means, bags of ice all down their spine and hot-water bottles on the

pit of the stomach. But, in truth, for such persons there is no cure for their enemy. Fear has turned their flank even before embarking. Let them lie down beneath boats and booms, on benches, sofas, hatchways, and there spend their time, if the voyage is short, in ejaculations and brandy-and-water, till the wished-for haven is made. If the voyage is long, and they must pass a *triste noche* on board, they had better creep into a berth, lie flat on their backs, gnaw a hard biscuit, and try to doze away the weary hours.

There sat Aunt Mandeville on the deck, looking as firm as though she were in her pew in Mandeville church, and when the captain asked, 'How do *you* feel, marm?' surprising him with a 'I enjoy it very much indeed, captain!'

There were other passengers. A girls' school going down to Ilfracombe for an excursion; a party which ought to have held good, 'wind and weather permitting,' but which occurred, nevertheless, the tickets having been taken the day before. Some of the young ladies were already in the state of Brooks. The principal, or lady-superior as she would be called now, was too frightened to be ill, and irritated the mate, a

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huge Cornish man, by asking him, when she saw the pumps going to get rid of some bilge-water, 'whether we were in great danger?'

'Danger, marm! they ain't no danger; only we shall have a dollop of a sea when we gets into Bridgewater Bay — you won't find it there as calm as this.'

'Then why do you use the pumps? I thought they never took to the pumps till the ship was in danger.'

'Ve takes to the pumps because the vessel's not so tight as she should be, and we can't get shot of the bilge-water in no other way. It's nasty smelling stuff. Take care; if you lean over so, you'll get splashed.'

It was too late to warn the principal; she, too, looked hard over the side and followed Brooks.

Then there was an old colonel, a Devonshire squire; he was a good sailor, and as cheery as a bird. He began to talk to my Aunt, and pointed out the places as we passed them. Weston-super-Mare, Clevedon, the flat and steep Holms, Cardiff Bay, where we saw one or two vessels stranded, Bridgewater Bay, Minehead.

Whoever christened the *Diana* ought to be ashamed of herself. A Diana ought to be light and lively, able, if a ship, to do her ten knots or

more, to overtake other vessels in the chase, and to outsail all rivals. Not so was our *Diana*. We had the wind aft, and yet she crawled along, doing scarcely her six knots. She ought to have been renamed the *Tortoise*, for such a sea-slug never had boiler in her.

In Bridgewater Bay, just in that 'dollop' of a sea which the mate had promised us, dinner was served. It consisted, I need hardly say, of a boiled leg of mutton and turnips, under-done in the usual way, with the red gravy spurting out of it as soon as cut. My Aunt had sandwiches on deck; but I obeyed the captain's call, and sat down with him and the colonel. We proposed a broil, but the captain couldn't think of it.

'Biled' mutton, he maintained, was the sweetest and wholesomest thing on earth or sea.

'Not that I don't like "biled" beef, too, if it's "rare," like this.'

And, with that, he fell to swallowing large gobbets of meat, like Polyphemus or Gargantua.

The colonel and I satisfied our hunger, which was intense, with a few morsels of the best-done parts of the leg, and ran up on deck to take a look at the weather. The sea had got even beyond the mate's dollop; and, as soon as the

captain came on deck, he ordered the sails to be close-reefed.

‘Can’t afford to throw away the wind,’ he said; ‘but it blows strong, and we shall feel it worse off Porlock.’

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW I SAW SOMEBODY ON BOARD THE STEAMER.

AND now, for the first time, I was aware of a couple stowed away under one of the boats, which sheltered them from the spray, which now began to fly about as the sea grew whiter and 'gurlier,'—to use the old Scotch word—and the tops of each 'white horse' were cut straight off by the keen wind.

One of them was a tall, elderly man, evidently a gentleman; and the other was as plainly a lady, and a young one; but they were so muffled up that it was hard to tell what they were besides.

I wondered then, I wonder still, and I shall wonder on till I die, whether women feel the same curiosity to know what a muffled-up man is like that men do to know what a veiled woman is like. I know it is sometimes supposed that women have more curiosity than men; but it is a mistake—just as it is a mistake to think that women are greater gossips than men; and that

they can't keep a secret better. Why, the greatest blabs and gossips, and the most ridiculously inquisitive mortals I have ever met, have been men. Look at old Fetch-and-carry at the Club!—can any woman be a greater gossip than he? And, as for curiosity, why, he'd watch a whole night, with his feet up to the ankles in snow, to know how late you came home in the morning; and, ten to one, just as you were drawing your latch-key out of the door, he'd come across the street, in still deeper snow, to ask you where you had been, and what you had been about—'coming home at that late hour.'

Whenever I dine at the Club, which isn't often, I know he asks the steward what I have for dinner—what wine I drink—if I had oysters before and coffee after—what oysters I had, natives at half-a-crown, or Medinas at eighteen-pence—and so on *ad infinitum*. Poor old fellow! he hasn't much to do; and I take it out in laughing at him, and hoaxing him with stories that never happened. I don't grudge him the pleasure of knowing what I eat and what my dinner costs; but don't any of you dare to tell me he isn't curious, and that he doesn't enjoy going about gossiping from house to house, and blabbing, as much as any

old woman. They say that the imbibing of brandy can be instantly detected by its appearance in the brain ; but I'll back a story to run from old Fetch-and-carry's ear to his tongue far faster than any spirit from the stomach to the cerebellum.

I wonder, then, I say, whether women are as inquisitive about men, when muffled up, as men are about women in the same case. I am inclined to think they are not. Why have men in the East risked their lives, in the good old times of the sack and the bowstring, in breaking into harems, and in the West braving the terrors of the Inquisition—its racks, and fires, and stakes—in scaling convents? Why, even in England when men did such wicked things, was there such pleasure in getting over a boarding-school wall, and running off in the night with one of the young ladies? The inhabitants of the harem, the convent, and the boarding-school, were in each case, be it observed, mere pigs in pokes, who might have charms, and might have none! Why? Because whatever is hid away, and muffled up, and guarded by blacks, and duennas, and teachers, is supposed to be infinitely more lovely than what is exposed to the light of day. Fruit in a garden is far more fruit than that which grows by the road-

side, hanging in every one's reach; and so it is with women. If you want your daughter to run away, shut her up. This will give her beauty, if she has none, and increase any charms that she may have tenfold; and if you want any one to run away with her, this receipt will be more infallible still. There will be a mystery hanging over her which will draw lovers to her from all quarters. Nay, even the pig-faced lady would have had many admirers if she had never shown her face, been married in a Honiton-lace veil, and persuaded her husband that she was under a vow never to raise it. More than this. I am sure that man would have lived happily all his life with that famous lady, and never found out her pigfacedness till she had died in her tenth confinement, all because her beauty was hidden and concealed.

So there was I pacing the deck and holding on hard every now and then, as the *Diana* rolled and pitched most ungracefully, with the muffled couple before me. They bore the weather very fairly, and for a long while held out no signal of distress. That was in their favour. They were not of that class of travellers by sea whose hearts are ever in their mouth. They might suffer inwardly, but not evidently as those baser natures which I have already described. Thus

we played at pitch-and-toss, the great waves rolling in upon us from the west sou-west; and the Sea-slug, or the Tortoise miscalled *Diana*, floundered about by them in a most ungainly way. As the wind was on shore we had to stand well out in respectful distance from the bold coast of North Devon, now opening on our lee. Still the muffled couple, their heads bowed on their bosoms, made no sign. I felt like that student at Sais who stood and read on the veil of the granite statue: 'I am what I am, and you are what you are; and between us is no fellowship of feeling.' Then I revenged myself in thinking what the couple could be—a Jew and his wife on a wedding tour; an attorney and his daughter; a solicitor and his niece. How long I should have gone on thinking no one can tell, had not the sea, sympathising with my curiosity, given the *Diana* such a buffet that she pitched, rolled and tossed, and lurched all at once. In a moment both the muffled sphynxes—no! I will not call them sphynxes—were thrown on their knees on the deck. There is something ridiculous in seeing even your friend suddenly 'decanted' in the hunting field; what, then, was it to me to behold two utter strangers on their knees before me, as though in the act of imploring my forgiveness for having puzzled

me so long? If I had been a bold, bad young man, I should have flown to the assistance of the muffled lady, and lifted her tenderly to the seat. Instead of this, I was a very shy young man with ladies, though when the ice was broken I could talk to them fast enough. Just for all the world like those silly young men now-a-days, who have made *mésalliances* because they daren't open their mouths to a lady in society.

Instead, then, of flying to help the lady, I turned my attention to her male companion. I swear I did this from no base desire to curry favour with what was evidently the lady's protector, were she young or old. It was all shyness and the love of my species that made me behave as I did. My virtue was instantly rewarded. In a voice weak with struggling so long against his internal foe, the gentleman said:

'Pray attend to my daughter, whom I am quite unable to help. I can crawl up myself.'

However, before he ended these few words I had re-seated him. It was the work of a second, half done before he began to speak; and then I turned to the daughter, whom, half on her feet, another lurch had thrown floundering again.

Very gently and very shyly I lifted her up. She was more frightened than hurt at the fall,

but I had to lift her before I could replace her at her father's side.

What is there in the touch of young female flesh and blood which sends such a thrill through a young man's veins? I should like to ask this question of a jury of matrons. Here was I in the most unpoetical of positions hauling up a half-seasick young lady, muffled up to the roots of her hair, and yet I felt a thrill.

The *Diana* now began to behave in such an outrageous way, and made up for her sea-sluggishness by a series of starts and jumps, as though she were the hunted deer itself, and not the goddess of the chase. I could no longer pace the deck without risk of being lurched overboard. No orang-outang could have done it. Aunt Mandeville called to me to sit down, as it gave her the fidgets to see me passing and repassing and staggering to and fro. I had to sit down somewhere; so I sat down by the muffled young lady. Can any one say that I was at all pushing or bold? Besides, had not her own father handed her over to my care?

I sat down, therefore, with a good conscience; and, just as I did so, the father, on whom the lurches and liveliness of the *Diana* were by no means lost, slid off the seat on to the deck, drew a sort of roquelaure or cloak closer about him, and

saying, 'My morale is still strong, but my physique is vanquished; pray, sir, continue your kindness and attend to my daughter,'—resigned himself to the inevitable with the grand air of an early martyr.

Twice enjoined to attend to his daughter, what was I to do? He could not think it rude if I spoke to her, and asked her how she felt. No! I don't think that was what I said first. I am sure it wasn't. I said, 'The weather is very bad;,' and, then, when no answer was returned to this evident truism, I asked,

'I hope you feel better?'

'A little. Shall we be much longer on our voyage?'

The ice was broken. No person can be really sea-sick and utter so long a sentence. I forget what I said next. Something stupid, no doubt. Most young men are very stupid in these matters at twenty,—and I am sure I was. I remember, though, that she said she was afraid her father was much worse than she was.

'Papa is not at all strong. Do you know anything that would do him any good?'

Was I a doctor to be able to cure sea-sickness? Luckily, I remembered the last words of old Mindererus to my Aunt.

'My dear Mrs. Mandeville, should you feel at
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all ill, don't forget that a glass of weak brandy-and-water is the best thing you can take.'

My Aunt, as a perfect sailor, laughed at the doctor's prescription. As for brandy-and-water, I don't suppose all the Roman Emperors and all the Popes of Rome put together, would ever have got her to drink a drop of it. But I now remembered it. So I went down the companion—that is to say, I made a dash at the stairs—and succeeded in hitting them. Down below I found the steward, with his assistant, a greasy, unwashed cub, eating the remains of the leg of mutton. I think I still see, as I write, the great lumps of cold fat which they were swallowing like Esquimaux when I appeared. I carefully turned my head away while the mixture was being made, that I might not see that it had mutton fat in it. Then I clutched it and a hard biscuit. If captains' biscuits are so called because of their hardness, this was an admiral's biscuit, so adamantine did it seem. If it was hard work to get down the companion, the return passage was harder. But I made it tolerably well, only losing half the brandy-and-water on the way. The other half was more than enough for the prostrate father, who lay yellow as a guinea, when one could see his face. By fits and starts, I got about a wine-glassful of my tumbler down his

throat. He declared himself much better in a husky voice, and I returned to my young lady.

To my surprise I found her too much better. So far from hurting her, she thought her fall had done her good. It was so kind of me to take care of papa. Whereabouts were we? would we soon be there? All these questions to come out of a hood, and never to see her face! Yes! once I saw the tip of her nose. It was not red.

Now, had I been as the young men of this time, I should have been as cool as the South Pole; I say the South Pole, because that is said to be cooler than the North. I should have plied her with questions, asked her if she read *The Owl*, what pastimes she liked? did she like croquet? had she been abroad? When she was in London had she seen Schneider? been to Wimbledon and Hurlingham? wasn't the 'Zoo' low now on Sundays? how she liked the shady side of Rotten Row, between one and two P.M., and such like.

But I was a shy young man of that time, and mainly confined myself to answering the young lady's questions. As for our voyage, I explained our whereabouts as well as I could. We had passed Porlock, and were off Linton—that was twenty miles from Ilfracombe. Here Exmoor made a bow to the sea, and here they hunted the red deer; and somewhere hereabouts—though

where I scarcely know, though it really stares one in the face as you pass by it on the sea—was the famous Valley of Rocks. In about three hours at our present rate perhaps, or two and a half, we should be at Ilfracombe, and then we should have to land in long ‘gigs.’ Did she know what I meant by ‘gigs?’ Yes, she knew; a gig was a sort of boat; her uncle the Admiral often talked of going on shore in his gig.

Now I for once grew crafty, and tried to find out her Christian name. What was the name of her uncle’s ship?—the *Victoria*. ‘How oddly names were given!’ I remarked.

‘Very oddly,’ she said. ‘Hers was an odd name.’

‘Indeed?’

‘You could never guess it.’

‘May I try?’

‘Certainly.’

So I guessed ever so long, trying all sorts of names. Then she gave me what she called ‘Lights.’

‘It is the name of a nymph, and a fountain, and a ship, and the ancient poets and the modern poets have sung of it, and it is the refrain of a famous sea-song; and now can’t you guess?’

‘Perhaps I may,’ I said, ‘for I begin to see aylight through your lights; and, in return, I

will give you some. Shelley says that some one of your name came down from the "Acroceraunian Mountains," and a great sea-song writer has called the ship after which you were called "Saucy." Have I guessed it now ?

'Yes ; but pray see after papa, he lies so still.'

'Willingly ; but will you tell me one thing ?'

'Yes, if you will go to papa.'

'Where's your sea-sickness ?'

'Gone—fled, perhaps, to the "Acroceraunian Mountains."'

'Who cured it ?'

'The fall, to be sure.'

'Nothing else ?'

'No, nothing.'

Here my Aunt Mandeville called out 'Edward.'

As I rose to go, Miss Arethusa said, 'Now we are equal. I know your name, and you have guessed mine, but not before I had given you so many "lights" that you could not help it.'

Between my seat and that on which my Aunt sat, I said to myself, 'I have never been so warmed up in my life. Nursing young ladies who are sea-sick is not so unpleasant.'

My Aunt only wanted me to ask the captain how far we were off Ilfracombe.

I sought that rough diamond, and found him

at tea. No degenerate five o'clock tea was that. Ham and eggs, and tea and jam. Down they all went, as he himself said, 'like winkin'.'

'If I didn't eat my meals like winkin', I should never have them regular. They would come all together one atop of t'other? Would I take any tea?'

'No! Thanks. I only came to find out how soon we were likely to be at Ilfracombe.'

'Very soon; we had got the tide with us now, and were off Watermouth. Tell the lady in half-an-hour.'

After reporting progress to my Aunt, I stirred up Brooks, the footmen, and the maids, who had all succumbed, and looked very like Jonah after he had spent those three days inside the whale. I say this advisedly. They had all such a half-masticated look.

Then I returned to Arethusa. Arethusa what? That still remained a blank. But alas! I found the pond frozen over again. Now it was all 'Yes' and 'No.' There were no long sentences. Yes, there was one longer—'She did not know;' that was an answer to a question how long she was going to stay at Ilfracombe.

'After all,' I said to myself, 'it doesn't matter. I don't suppose we shall see anything more of them.'

Observe here how I still said 'we.' My Aunt Mandeville and I were still one in my mind's eye. I did not yet dare to say, 'I shall not see more of them.'

About this time the approach of the end of the voyage worked its usual miracle on the prostrate passengers, who ten minutes before were on the eve of giving up the ghost. First. Arethusa's father, the man of unvanquished morale, rose from the deck, and in a faint voice thanked me for my kindness to him and his daughter. He did not, however, tell me his name, but merely said, 'I hope we shall meet again.' A very vague hope; very much like a general invitation to dinner, or to shoot. It sinned, as the lawyers say, 'for want of particularity.'

Rather disgusted to find, as I thought, my brandy-and-water returning so soon to my own bosom, I again looked up Brooks, and found him haranguing the maids and footmen on the 'hinfamous be-aviour of one of them sailors,' who had called him, it seems, 'the son of a sea-cook,' because he would not get out of the way.

'Look at me, John, and you, too, Thomas. Look at me, butler at Mandeville Hall for better nor thirty years, me, who 'ave had the

key of the cellar all those years,—me “the son of sea-cook!” I knows a land-cook when I sees one, which it is you Mrs. Jellybag, but whoever seed or heerd of a sea-cook before. Master Edward, now, did you ever see a sea-cook?’

‘No, Brooks; but if you go on making that row they ’ll call you a sea-ass instead of a land one.’

This silenced Brooks, and it was high time, for we were just off the little harbour of Ilfracombe, and there were the long gigs coming off to take us out of the *Diana*.

Now it is with sea-gigs as with land-gigs, ever since Mr. W. Weare’s murder. The sole possession of a gig makes a man ‘respectable,’ whether on sea or land. The captain’s gig is the noblest boat that swims, and the bagman’s gig is the most respectable vehicle that runs on wheels. We Mandevilles had one whole gig for ourselves and servants, and another for our baggage. In the third gig went the now distant Arethusa and her thankless father, as I thought him.

‘Drank my brandy-and-water, and gave me over his daughter to nurse, and then only hope to see me again.’ Such were the thoughts that filled my mind as we pulled rapidly in our splendid eight-oared gig over the rolling waves.

Let me not forget to say that Brooks, by a

sad mishap on being handed down into the boat, slipped into the sea, was pulled out by a boathook which caught him by the waist-band, and after all called a 'lubber' by the mate for his clumsiness.

'A sea-cook and a lubber, Master Edward! Pretty names to call a confidential servant.'

CHAPTER XIX.

HOW WE LANDED AT ILFRACOMBE.

WE landed at the pier between the harbours, and paced up against a strong wind to the hotel. I think it rejoiced in the name *Britannia*, and very glad we were to be there, after a voyage of ten hours. I think it was about eight o'clock, but I am sure that no one in the hotel slept more soundly on that night than I, Edward Halfacre.

My Aunt was tired, as well she might be, between the posting from Mandeville Hall, the bad beds at Bristol, and the rough passage to Ilfracombe. She was usually an early riser, but she did not rise very early that July morning? I went downstairs, threw open the window of our sitting-room, which had a balcony overlooking the sea, and as I stepped out I said to myself, but out loud, 'I wonder where Arethusa is?'

Observe, I could only call her Arethusa, because I did not know her surname.

N.B.—Warning to elderly fathers always to give their cards to those to whom they confide their daughters on steamboats, unless they wish them to call their daughters by their Christian names.

With the words in my mouth, ‘I wonder where Arethusa is?’ I stepped out, and there, on a continuation of our balcony, which belonged to the sitting-room next to us, stood a young lady who nodded to me at once, for though I had never seen her face, that is to say, no more of it than the tip of her nose, she had many opportunities of seeing mine.

What, then, was Arethusa like? She was of middle height; that is to say, she was what I call every man’s money. Very tall women ought to have lived before the Flood. It is a very long time back, and would make them very old, but I have a very good reason for putting them thus. ‘There were giants in those days,’ and they would all have got husbands at once. Now-a-days, a very tall woman is a drug in the wife market. Short men, no doubt, are very bold and courageous, as is the manner of dwarfs and boys standing on their inches, and frequently getting into a quarrel merely because they are short, and feel sure some one is going to insult them; but every short man, or every middle-aged man, is

not bold enough to marry a woman to kiss whom he must have a ladder.

But Arethusa was just the height that every man might marry, whether tall or short—not so short as to look insignificant by the side of a tall man, and not tall enough to overshadow a short husband. She looked, too, taller than she was—an undoubted gift of some women, but how gotten no one knows. Her figure was round and slim; she had small hands and feet, the feet being the smallest in proportion; she had violet-blue eyes—a very deep blue—but very bright and large besides. Her complexion was milk-white, with a slight flush when animated on her cheeks, and under the soft, white skin you could see the blue veins. Her hair was very dark-brown, one shade off black, I should say, but there was a dash of golden hair among it, which gave it in some lights a sunny glory. Her lips were full—not too full, but not thin; her chin was like a Greek coin of one of Alexander's successors, but which I cannot call to mind now. She had a delicate nose, with just a tiny rise in it, as if it had once half a mind to be Roman, but changed its half mind before the intention could take effect. She had strong, regular, white teeth, and very small ears. And now I think I have given you a perfect photograph of her, though when I

first saw her there were no such things as photographs.

After all, I have left out her expression. She might have had all the charms that I have said, and yet been hideous. Expression in the face is like charity among the Virtues. Without that perfect gift all our virtues are worth nothing. Arethusa had a most sweet and winning smile, and an earnest way of looking at you out of her great blue eyes that sank deep into your soul. This is very poetical language, but it expresses what I felt after I had known her a little time.

Of course I did not discern all these beauties there and then on that balcony. Perfect beauty, as hers was, comes on one by little and little. Like a great mountain, you cannot grasp it all at once. Besides, I was too much scared. Have I not told you that I was very shy? I had only mechanically wondered where Arethusa was, and, by turning the catch of a window, there she stood before me. Such a trick of natural magic was enough to frighten one out of one's senses. I was like the Necromancer's pupil, who had called the devil, and, much to his astonishment, the devil came.

Fright, I suppose, gave me boldness. I went to Arethusa along the balcony, and said, 'Good

morning, Miss ——' and here I stopped short and marked the Miss emphatically.

'And good morning, Mr. ——' said Arethusa, making my blank still blanker than her own.

'Halfacre.'

'Halfacre! What an odd name! Why not Wholeacre while you were about it?'

'It is a very old name,' I babbled apologetically.

'Then the sooner you change it the better. I hate old things, especially if they are ugly. If it were my name, I would change it at once.'

'Very likely. Young ladies change their names, but men don't; and now may I ask what the name is which you like so much better than mine?'

'Chichester.'

'Chichester of Arlington Court? If so, my Aunt knows them.'

'Not the Chichesters of Arlington Court. We are distant cousins of those Chichesters; but is your Aunt's name Halfacre too?'

'My Aunt's name is Mandeville. Perhaps you like that better than Halfacre?' I said, dryly, because I felt nettled at hearing my fine old name ridiculed.

'I say at once I like it much better. It came in with the Conquest, of course.'

‘And the Halfacres were here long before the Conquest?’

‘No doubt; and that’s why they’re called Halfacres, of course; the Normans took away all their land except half-an-acre, and kept all the rest for themselves. I’ve read it all in Magnall’s Questions and Mrs. Markham. If you don’t take care, I’ll talk to you about Doomsday.’

Of course had I been equal to the occasion, I should have told Arethusa to talk on till Doomsday, but I said nothing of the kind. I felt rather hurt at being laughed at, as I thought, and I began to consider how old Arethusa was. Looking at her again, and running over her face and figure at a glance, I set her down at my own age, perhaps a year younger; but then the *indicia ætatis* are not strongly marked in young people, and I might well be over the mark in my estimate of her age.

But I felt that whatever her age, she was more than a match for me in wit, and as I thought myself a perfect man—had I not been called ‘man’ at Oxford ever since I was seventeen and a half?—I felt vexed, not reflecting that in all times, even in those good old times when girls, like plums, still had the bloom on them till they were twenty—a girl eighteen or twenty has been quite equal to a man five years older.

While this was passing through my mind,—it takes long to tell; but it was in action the work of an instant,—I heard my Aunt's voice calling me from the sitting-room, and at the same moment the head of Arethusa's father appeared at the open window, and said:

'Arethusa,'—I am not sure that he did not call her 'Toosy'—'Breakfast's ready.'

I saw that he saw me, but no recognition passed, and he still remained in my mind as an impersonal somebody, a mythic giver of general invitations to meet him somewhere—that is, nowhere in particular, at no given time. Arethusa I knew something of. I felt she could laugh at me, but her father was as much a reality to me as Castor and Pollux.

I found Aunt Mandeville making tea. She felt all the better for her sleep, and said she had enjoyed the 'sail,' as she called it, wonderfully.

'Far better than Brooks, Edward; they tell me he has got a fit of lumbago after his cold bath; and besides, they say he takes on so, and is so worried at being called names by the vulgar sailors.'

'How long are we to stay in this hotel, Auntie?'

'Only until I can get a house large enough to hold us. They say there is one up the valley,

at Wildersmouth. After breakfast we will go to look at it, and explore the place. But what were the names of our fellow-passengers of whom you took such care? I was glad to see you helped the father first, and that you went and got him something from below. That was just as young men ought to behave, and not to be too forward in thrusting their attentions on young ladies, who are generally too much abashed by the act of boldness to avail themselves of the mistaken kindness.'

Poor Aunt Mandeville! she had evidently Hannah More's ideal young ladies in her eye, all bashfulness and bread and butter, cream-ices that will melt if one looks warmly at them. I am inclined to think that such young ladies were nearly extinct in her time, and Arethusa was evidently not one of the class. What Aunt Mandeville would have done had she lived in these degenerate days I am sure I really cannot tell. One turn in Rotten Row in the season, or at the Botanic Gardens, or one visit to the Eton and Harrow Match, one service at St. Andrew's, Wells Street, or one croquet-party at Lady Snapdragon's, would have driven her to desperation, as she saw how young ladies now dress, and how they talk to young men, even when they smoke out-of-doors, and answer them in their own slang.

‘Their name is Chichester, very distant relations of Arthur Chichester, who is up at Christ Church, and lives at Arlington Court, somewhere hereabouts.’

‘I have heard your Uncle Mandeville talk of Jack Chichester, who was a gay man about town when your Uncle left Oxford. He was in the Guards, and distinguished himself at Waterloo; afterwards I think he exchanged into a line regiment in India. Your Uncle seemed very fond of him, for he often wondered—and he was not much given to wonder—where old Jack Chichester was.’

These recollections were cut short by the rueful visage of Brooks, who came limping in on a stick, and to tell us the pleasant information that ‘most of Master Edward’s things were as wet as dung, and all along of them careless sailors in their gig, who never put their “tarpolly,” as they calls it, over the portmanteau, which it has got soaked with sea-water.’

‘Then,’ said I, ‘you must soak them again in fresh water,—the woollen things, I mean,—and have them dried and ironed. As for the linen things, they need only be washed, and they’ll be all right.’

‘‘Orrid hout-of-the-way place!’ muttered Brooks; ‘wish we had never set foot in it; never

a clear staroher, nor a soul as knows how to wash a shirt in it. I'll be bound !'

So saying he limped off, declaring that if he once sat down with this lumbago on him, he would never be able to get up again.

Now-a-days, we should have punctured him with a pierced needle, like the fang of a rattlesnake, and injected morphia on the sciatic nerve ; and he would have had rest ; but then he had to try his old remedies of opodeldock and harts-horn and oil ; and if they didn't do him any good, to grin and bear it.

Leaving Brooks to himself, Aunt Mandeville and I sallied out. First, we started up the long, rambling street, that makes a bend from the bight of the inner harbour, and then spreads and straggles up the hill. Just where the Barnstaple road turns off, it has half a mind, as we had, to go up there ; but it was out of breath, I suppose, as we were, and thought better of it, and so took the lower line. After a while we found the street began to descend again, and to grow less and less respectable. So we retraced our steps a little way, and turned down a side road ; there were houses on one side of it, but not enough to make a street. This road led us by a steep descent down into the valley or combe, under the Torrs or cliffs. Here we

came upon the Wilder, a brook which runs through the valley; and perched up in a field on the other side of the stream was the house of which we were in search. Outside it was prettily planted, and the myrtles and fuchsias, and all flowering shrubs, grew luxuriantly in the deep red soil. There were a few trees about it, and a paddock. Inside it was not more scantily furnished or more uncomfortable than sea-side houses usually are. There were the regulation arm-chairs, which would have given Brooks a fit of lumbago even to look at. There was a crick in the back, and a cramp in each arm of them. Then there was a horsehair sofa, constructed with a view to drainage, I suppose, in that damp climate,—on an incline, so that any one who lay down on it instantly glided off the slippery surface. And there was another sofa, a kind of monster between an arm-chair and a sofa—an arm-chair with a long tail to it, running off at an angle, just such a couch as that bed of misery on which the victims of the Inquisition used to be stretched before they underwent the *peine forte et dure*, or on which our criminals, who refused to plead, were ‘pressed’ of yore—a sofa on which it was impossible to sit or lie, turn or twist yourself whichever way you might. O cabinet makers!

—not Messrs. Gladstone and Disraeli, but ye Messrs. Hollands, Gillows, and Trollopes of our watering-places—pity the sorrows of a poor old cripple, and never make one of these arm-chair sofas !

Those were not the days when the Scarlet Fever—like the Chisholm, or the O'Donohoe, or the McGillicuddy of the Reeks—regularly went out of town to the sea-side every summer. No one then expected to find him ubiquitous at every watering-place at once. So we asked no questions as to whether he had lately lived in Wildersmouth House, —that was the name of our new abode. Perhaps had we asked, and he had been there, we should have been assured he had not. He is a personage whom no lodging-house keeper likes to confess that she has taken in, so she keeps the secret, until you wake, or your wife wakes, or your children wake one fine morning—just as you have declared only the evening before, that you think the place most delightful—with the worst cold you or they ever had in their lives, followed by a flush, a glow, a fever, head symptoms and throat symptoms. The doctor comes ; your house is immediately divided into the clean and the unclean—the sheep and the goats. You drench the children with belladonna as a prophylactic, and send them back to town.

If you have it, your wife stays to nurse you. If she has it, you stay to nurse her. If one of the children, you both stay. The result is a very jolly holiday. The owner of the house turns you out as soon as she can, making you pay a month's rent to purify the house of a disease which she is ready to take her Bible oath you must have brought with you. When you pay Dr. Bryony his bill, he tells you he thinks you escaped very well; for the last fatal case of scarlet fever he had was buried from that house two days before you came. If you ever came again, and would write to him beforehand, he would take care that you were put into an uninfected house. But, of course, you never go to that place again. You have had enough of it. So you shake the dust off your feet, and the golden dust out of your purse, and depart, feeling quite sure that twenty-four hours will not pass before a fresh family succeeds you in your scarlet fever lodgings.

But things were not so bad as that at Ilfracombe in 183-. We asked no questions, and so we were told no lies. My Aunt liked the situation, before which lay the sea, seen through the cove at Wildersmouth, with the capstan hill, then innocent of a walk round it, and the old light-house chapel perched over the entrance to

the harbour beyond it. Half way up the path from Wildersmouth to the Bathing cove was a gate. I remember that gate well; it was five-barred, and I used to jump over it half-a-dozen times a-day on my way up or down. As the old Marquis of Millionford said to the great Duke of Wellington, when they saw a shepherd-boy munching a turnip on Salisbury Plain, with a splendid appetite, aided by a set of bright white teeth: 'I would give all my wealth, which I have got, and all your glory, which I have not got, to be able to eat a turnip like that boy;' so would I give all the wealth which I have not got, and all the glory which I have still less got, to be as I then was, able to jump over that five-barred gate half-a-dozen times a-day.

I have always been fond of Ilfracombe—when it doesn't rain. I remember when we first went there we stayed in for some days because it rained every day, and we thought we would not go out till it cleared. But the inhabitants, who showed us no small kindness, came to us in waterproofs—I think they were about the first macintoshes made—and besought us to come out, for as to calling that drizzle rain, they assured us it was to them real summer weather.

But Ilfracombe, with the sun on it and the lights over the bounding green waves, and the

surf dashing in its many coves, and the spray and foam flying, and rainbows gleaming on the broken clouds, is a sight seldom to be seen in England. Lovely, too, is it at night, when the moon is at the full. I remember the harvest moon in August the year we were there, how it rose over Wildersmouth, full and yellow, with a warmth which seemed its own, just as the sun set; and how Aunt Mandeville, and Colonel Chichester, and I, and Arethusa sat and looked at it, till the dew fell fast and thick.

But I am getting on too fast. Where were we? Oh! we had just taken Wildersmouth House, and were on our way back to the hotel to despatch Brooks and the servants to their new abode.

CHAPTER XX.

HOW I SAW NOTHING OF ARETHUSA.

JUST as we passed through the gate of which I have spoken, two persons met us. I saw at once they were Arethusa and her father. They both recognised me this time, and I bowed in return and held open the gate for them till they had passed on.

‘Who were those, Edward?’ said my Aunt, surprised at my having found persons to bow to in a new place. ‘You are like a sailor; you find friends everywhere.’

‘Those are the Chichesters—our fellow-passengers. They were so muffled up on board that you could not recognise them.’

‘And how then did you recognise them?’ said my Aunt, beginning to be jealous.

‘I saw them in the hotel this morning, and then they recognised me. They were unmuffled, you know, and so I knew them. They of course knew me.’

I did not tell Auntie that I had had a long conversation with Arethusa on the balcony before breakfast. Why I did not I am sure I don't know. Perhaps you will say with the Psalmist, 'The heart of man is deceitful above the weights.' You are quite welcome, spiteful old moralist reader, to say what you please of me, who am as much a nonentity to you as Arethusa's father then was to me—one of whom you know nothing, and shall know nothing, except what I choose to tell you; but to any fair and candid reader, not over-biblical, not too cut-and-dried, who is not for ever bringing her 'precious balms' out of her medicine-chest—drugs and balms hard and heavy enough to break my head—I will declare, on the honour of a gentleman, that I really do not know, and did not know, why I said nothing to my Aunt Mandeville about my interview with Arethusa.

The servants were soon despatched, all except Brooks, whose lumbago had come 'worsen nor ever,' according to his own account, and who wanted us to stay where we 'was' for another night. In fact, he tried to play the tyrant over my Aunt at Ilfracombe just as he was wont at Mandeville Hall; but once off her own dung-hill, on which she was weak where others are strong, she was strong where others are weak.

She threw off her slavery with the sod, and was mistress over Brooks.

But we had a little scene—a *tableau vivant* of petty domestic troubles, in which Brooks unassisted played all the parts. He was sure that we should all get our deaths of cold; he'd be bound there hadn't been a fire in Wildersmouth House since this time last year; bitten to death we were certain to be; full of ear-wigs and blackbeetles, he'd be cock-sure—'Odd rabbet 'em!' This last mysterious expression, and 'Drat it!' were two favourite expletives of Brooks, when he had reached such a fever-pitch of indignation that he had to let off the steam, lest what answered to a boiler inside him should burst. They were safety-valves, in fact. What the meaning of them is I know, and so do you, O philological brother; but I am not going to analyse their construction or meaning more fully, for this is a book in which there is no swearing.

Then 'the beer wasn't in the house, and if it wasn't in the house who was to fetch it? Nor was there any wine for missus. Nothing for dinner? No, not so much as a chop; and how could he stir to see about all these things with this here lumbago biting his back?'

But as some one had to do it, and my Aunt

Mandeville couldn't, and I was supposed to have no experience, Brooks had to do it. He and the cook got what was needful. The servants had their dinner at the hotel before we left. Then they laid in tea and supper for themselves, and dinner for us; and, in spite of Brooks's forebodings, we were very comfortable that first night at Wildersmouth House; and so we continued till our time was up.

Of course the reader expects that I was dying to get on more intimate terms with Arethusa, and he is prepared to see me taking every sensational way to effect my object. For instance, she might be described as climbing a crag—one of those treacherous slate rocks not far from Wildersmouth—and as having got half way up on to a ledge, from which she could neither ascend nor descend. There, though naturally brave as a lion, she would be compelled by hunger, or some other motive from which not even lions are free, to wring her hands or wave her handkerchief for help. Her aged, grizzle-haired sire would be flourishing the telescope, by means of which he has just detected his daughter's dangerous position, on the beach. Just as the young lioness—lady, I mean—had resolved that the only means of escape would be to throw herself down into the arms of her parent—a step by

which her neck and his spine would be infallibly broken—I should be descried jumping across the Wilder, just where I afterwards sprained my ankle, in the highest physical development of which a muscular Christian is capable. No! I should not be crossing the beach; it is highly improper in a muscular Christian to save a young lady from below. English ladies are not yet Bloomers. I should be descried coming down from the Torrs, my stately figure rendered still more herculean by the sun shining behind me as I strode along the ridge. To see the young lady perched up there like a guillemot or a puffin, and to understand her difficulty, would be the work of a second. I would let myself down by a rope. Where did I get the rope from? O silly question! Most muscular Christians, especially if they are High-churchmen, always carry rope enough with them to hang themselves coiled round their waists. However, in this case I need not have had it round my waist; a pet lamb would have been tethered to a stake by a cord long enough and strong enough to bear my weight and Arethusa's—say twenty stone. No muscular Christian now-a-days weighs less than thirteen stone; and Arethusa, slim and slight, not more than seven—say eight, and make the total twenty-one. Or, smugglers should have been.

there, plying their traffic by night, and should have forgotten the rope by which they dragged their tubs and kegs up the face of the rock. By one of these three ropes, or all of them twisted together in a true lover's knot—if one of them, like the cow's tail that reached to the moon, had not been long enough—I should have swung myself over the edge, first tying the other end fast to the bole of a gigantic oak that grew close to the cliff. I should have reached Arethusa just as she had repeated the Nicene Creed, or, better still, chanted it to Gregorian tones before throwing herself over. I should have caught her in my arms, and swarmed up the rope again, disdaining to await for her father's arrival with men to haul us up. To his surprise he would have found us idly stretched on the turf, and talking of the odds on the International University Boat-race, as cool as cucumbers and as harmless as doves. I should then have declared my passion, and implored his forgiveness for daring to take the lovely Arethusa in my arms; on which he would have made answer, 'Having taken so much, you had better take her altogether.' We should have rushed at him both at once and embraced his venerable form: Arethusa in front and I behind. What more can I add, except that we should have been married that day week, as we

both hated long engagements, at St. George's, Hanover Square, with full choral service? I know Dr. Howarth won't hear of it in ordinary cases, but ours would have been an extraordinary one, and even that reverend Minos would have relaxed his rules. The Bishop of Bullocksmithy, assisted by the disestablished but not disendowed Archbishop of Armagh and Father Ignatius, would have performed the ceremony. We should then have lived happily all our days, had half as many children as Hecuba, and died universally respected; if I had not, as I grieve to say is sometimes the case with muscular Christians, grown morose and melancholy, and left my wife and family, because I felt that I had work to do in the Fijee Islands.

In the same way, and with as much probability, I might have saved Arethusa and her father, if they had been cut off by the waves, just as the sea had reached their necks; but as I have seen this patent-safety escape tried with success already, in one or two novels, I should have scorned imitation, and preferred the course already described.

Again, they might have been crossing a field by a footpath; or perhaps it would have been better to make them trespass, and have been attacked by a ferocious Devon bull. I should

have been crossing also, and attacked the bull as he is tackled in that long-forgotten book, 'Sandford and Merton,' which little boys now read homœopathically to make them sleep. They would escape, but I having being tossed twice, the second time on to a haystack, so that I could not be tossed thrice, should have lain there in a fainting state till the neighbours came with a ladder and got me down. I should have lingered a long time with several ribs broken, nursed by Aunt Mandeville, Arethusa, and her father, till a treaty of alliance had been agreed on between the colonel and my Aunt, and we should have been married in the way already described.

But, alas! this is no sensational story reared in the forcing-house of fiction, it is sober, bitter truth; and let me tell you bitter truth is wholesome enough, if you will listen to and be warned by me. How do the feelings and affections of the human heart grow? You might as well ask the grass how and why it grows: the seed-corn why it springs; why it grows faster at one time than another: cut by cold winds, nipped by frost, rained on, snowed on, hailed on, but it still grows on till it is either ripe or rotten, a full crop: a mere average or a failure. Time and place and season, opportunity and chance, have more to do with our affections than we fancy.

There lies the seed ready to grow if it has the chance; but it will not grow without external influences; and when it does grow, it is liable to just as many mishaps as any grain of wheat that is sown in the richest field.

If I could have saved Arethusa's life in any way, or done her any service, I should only have been too happy; but then I never had any opportunity. For a long time we went on bowing when we met, but that was all. I am sure I don't know that we should ever have known more of them had it not been for the merest accident; and not at all a sensational one either. We were caught in the rain down at Wildersmouth, without our waterproofs, and with no umbrellas; we had forgotten we were in Devonshire. The sun shone so brightly when we set out, it seemed as though we were in Italy. We had scarce sat down on the beach, when it rained in torrents, so we stood up under a rock, with a great overhanging shelf of slaty schist over us. It so happened that under the very same rock was cowering Arethusa's father, without his daughter, but with an umbrella. Now I should say that an umbrella was about the most useless thing that a man can carry—of course as I abuse them I never carry one. In fact, I left off carrying them after losing three running,

one wet summer, at the club. I remember of course the celebrated Popish umbrella which converted young Soaphead, who was at Oxford with me, to the Church of Rome. He was at Rome doing the churches in wet weather, and either lent his umbrella to a cardinal, or a cardinal lent him his. Whichever way it was he was converted, and I believe he now bears as his crest a green silk umbrella, displayed proper, in memory of the proud event, with the motto, '*Spectemur in imbre,*' instead of his old family crest, a hare courant, with the motto, '*Peur gagne peu.*' But as I consider going over to the Church of Rome to be a very doubtful good, I should not be inclined to quote Soaphead's case as proving the good of umbrellas.

But to show that there is good in everything I must quote the colonel's umbrella. There he was with his umbrella, next to a lady without one. As for me, I was made neither of salt nor of sugar, and there was no fear of my melting in the rain. Nor am I one of those interesting, consumptive heroes who take orders, go into the church, marry, have ten children, and then go to Madeira to die, leaving their family a burden to society. No! I am not consumptive, except at my meals, and then I am very much so. Let no eating-house keeper undertake to

feed me for a fixed sum, if he does, he will have the worst of it. There was then no fear for me; nor was there for my Aunt. She could bear a wetting as well as any one, if she had made up her mind to it and was clad accordingly. It was a sight to do your heart good to see her trudging across the park to Mandeville village in her grey cloak and clogs, in pouring rain, to visit some sick person. But there was one thing my Aunt had no mind to, and that was what she called 'spoiling her things.' She was old-fashioned enough to care for 'her things;' and though she had many dresses, and on the whole dressed in very good taste, she could not bear to come home with a good 'gown,' as she called it, 'all of a draggle.'

So there she was without an umbrella, next to an old gentleman who had one. I remember it was a green silk umbrella, with a cane handle and ivory ball top. It was a memorable umbrella to me. Now, I have told you that I am of a very shy nature. All these years I have been making up my mind to tell you this story, and haven't finished it yet. Had I been next to a lady to whom I had no introduction, I should never have been bold enough to speak to her, and offer my umbrella. I might have thrown it down on the sand in a savage way and fled,

leaving it to her to make use of it, and trusting to her honesty to restore it, or I might have sent some one else to her to offer her the umbrella; but I, Edward Halfacre, would never have plucked up courage to speak to her first, even to do her a service. It is a feeling which has lost me many friends, and perhaps saved me from many enemies through life.

But old Colonel Chichester—I call him old, though he was about fifty-eight. You call him old too? Well, then, we shan't quarrel; but perhaps, when you are fifty-eight, you mayn't like to be called old. Old Colonel Chichester was a very different man. He was a man of the world, had been a soldier, seen much of men and women in all countries, and, besides, was naturally polite. He was quite the man who might do anything he pleased because he had 'such good manners.' Have you ever met such a man, reader? If you have not, and are just visiting one of these gentlemen for the first time, all I say is, Beware of men whose manners are so good that they may do anything they like. They are the sort of men who may steal a horse out of a field when others mayn't look at him over the fence. Very pleasant fellows, if horse-stealing were not a crime, however politely it is done.

I ought to beg old Colonel Chichester's par-

don for taking away his character because he had good manners. He was equal to the occasion, and soon turned to my Aunt Mandeville, and said,—

‘I see you have no umbrella, madam, allow me to place mine at your disposal.’

I particularly remarked that he said ‘madam’ and not ‘ma’am.’

My aunt turned round and looked at the Colonel with something like a toss of her head, as much as to say, ‘It is not every one’s umbrella that I would accept, even though I don’t like to get wet.’

However her pride lasted but a second. It was stifled as soon as it was born. Love for her clothes got the better of the old Halfacre *hauteur*, and she said, with one of her most gracious smiles, and there was no one who smiled more winningly than my Aunt Mandeville :

‘I shall be very glad to accept it, if you will stay here under shelter until I send it back to you.’

The Colonel assented with a low bow, the umbrella was handed over, and I bore it aloft over my Aunt up to Wildersmouth House. I remember thinking as I felt the round ivory top that I had got the ball in my own hands now. The first move in the game had been

made, and though I was not yet in love with Arethusa I felt that soon I should be again on speaking terms with her. Feelings are so masked and veiled, even from oneself, that I firmly believe I only then fancied I wished to renew our acquaintance that I might pay her off for having laughed at my family name.

As soon as Aunt Mandeville was safely housed, she sent me back with the umbrella.

‘Run back quickly, Edward, and don’t be awkward; say something civil to the old gentleman for me. I am so much obliged to him. See, there are but a few spots on my black silk. Curl must come and wipe them off at once.’

Down I ran to Wildersmouth as fast as I could, taking little heed of sheltering myself under the umbrella, which played such an important part in the drama of my destiny. Is not that a fine sentence—the ‘drama of my destiny?’ If a drama is only another name for a play, I have found the drama of my destiny anything but play.

I found the Colonel sticking like a limpet to the rock, and I found another limpet with him whom I had not expected to see. Arethusa was by his side; and there I stood before them, bound to deliver the umbrella to its owner, and to say something civil, and not to be awkward.

I don't know if any of you share my feeling, that it is far easier to speak to one person than to two. Whether it be that if you say anything silly there is a witness to your silliness, or whether you feel that two to one is hardly fair, I don't know ; but though, as I ran down, I said to myself, ' Now, perhaps, I shall speak to Arethusa : ' when I found her standing before me I wished her a thousand miles off, and that I had only the old Colonel to whom to deliver my message.

However there they were, and I had to make the best of it.

' My Aunt is very much obliged to you for your umbrella, sir,' I said ; ' and she bade me say how sorry she was to keep you standing in the rain while she took it away.'

As I said these words I felt I was blushing like a peony, but I dextrously held the umbrella, which might be called our master of the ceremonies, over my head.

' I am very glad that your Aunt has been able to make use of it,' said the Colonel, reaching out his hand for the umbrella.

I gave it up very slowly because it hid my scarlet face, and because I felt as though in parting with its ball handle the whole globe was slipping out of my hand.

But the Colonel clutched it as though it were only an ivory handle, and not a master of the ceremonies, an introducer, or anything you like that brings two people together.

After he had hold of it, he turned to Arethusa, who stood beside him, dripping like her own fountain, and said,—

‘Toosey, you must be nearly wet through, we had better make the best of our way home;’ and accordingly away they went; Arethusa not so much as giving me one glance, and her father not even saying, ‘I hope we shall see you again.’

I looked after them, rooted to the ground, and felt that I had made very little out of the opportunity which the umbrella had given me of speaking to Arethusa. Slowly did I retrace my steps to Wildersmouth House, and I must have been long about it, though it was only two or three hundred yards from the rock of refuge; for I found luncheon waiting, and Brooks in a fever. He always was in a fever if any one kept luncheon waiting, for then he could not get what he called ‘his meals regular,’ for his dinner followed our luncheon.

‘Well, Edward,’ said my Aunt, ‘you have been rather long in delivering my message to Colonel Chichester. Did you walk home with him? I wonder where he lives?’

‘No, auntie, they walked off alone.’

‘They?’ said my Aunt, ‘how did Colonel Chichester become plural; when I left him he was alone under the rock.’

‘Yes, auntie, and when I found him, Miss Chichester was standing by him. How she came there I cannot tell. She was on the other side of the rock, I suppose. I gave the Colonel the umbrella, with a few civil words. He said he was glad to have lent it to you; and they, that is to say, he and Miss Chichester, walked off together. If I have been a long time coming I can’t understand it, for I only went there and back, and I am sure I was not with them two minutes.’

Here Brooks cut in. It was at luncheon, and he considered himself free to speak.

‘I see Master Edward a-coming up the lane, and he stop five minutes, at least, at the gate halfway up. He looked up the lane, and down the lane, and threw stones into the brook, and walked backwards and forwards four or five times. I says to myself, Brooks, Master Edward can never know how near lunch it be; and I made signs to him, but he took no heed, and when he did come he walked slowly like, as if it were a hot day in June, instead of raining cats and dogs.’

So the wretch had been watching me from

the drawing-room window, and now paid me off for delaying his dinner.

‘Perhaps Master Edward was thinking, Brooks. He has a great deal to think of just now. He is going to take his degree in November.’

I did not dare to look at Aunt Mandeville to see if she was laughing at me. Perhaps it was only my guilty conscience which made me take such a deep interest in the willow pattern of the plate before me. We all know now that it represents a heart-rending Chinese love-story; but perhaps if the luncheon had lasted long enough, I might have gazed down into my plate until I had discovered the meaning of the pattern, but my tormentor Brooks would not let me look long enough.

‘Will you have any more mutton, Master Edward?’ he asked; and before I could answer ‘yes’ or ‘no’ he had snatched off my plate. His real wish was to carry off the leg of mutton for himself, but the result of his greediness was to make me look my Aunt Mandeville full in the face.

Oh! that I had been in a land where butler-killing was no murder! I would have put that ‘sneak’ Brooks to death by slow torture.

After all, when I did look straight at Aunt Mandeville there was nothing so dreadful to see.

There she sat looking as happy as usual. So far from saying anything which could hurt my morbid feelings, she repeated her question as to where the Chichesters lived, and even asked me to try and find out their house.

I remember in my ignorance thinking, 'Well, she can't see into my heart; she can't know how much I wish to speak to Arethusa, or she would never ask me to find out where they live.'

I remember, too, thinking myself very prudent in answering,—

'Oh, I'm sure I don't know where they live,' which was quite true. 'Of course they live somewhere in the town, and it won't be hard to find out.'

There I ought to have let the matter rest, but I could not be quiet, and at breakfast next morning I asked Aunt Mandeville if she still wished to know where the Chichesters lived.

'Oh,' said my Aunt, answering me in my own words, 'of course they live somewhere in the town, and we can easily find out if we want.'

That day, which was finer than usual, that is to say, it did not rain more than six hours, I spent in my bedroom reading, only coming down, *à la* Brooks, to get 'my meals regular.'

However it was fated that I and Arethusa

were to know each other, and no shyness or awkwardness on my part, no suspicion or jealousy on that of my Aunt, no coolness of the Colonel, and no malignity of Brooks, could avert it. What was to be, was.

First when the Colonel met my Aunt, which he did twenty times a-day, he took off his hat; that is, he took it off the first two or three times. After that such frequent bowing, threatening the utter wear and tear of his beaver, became ridiculous, and instead of bowing, he used to smile. Then he held the gate open for my Aunt at least once a-day; and last, though not least, he and Arethusa were put into the same pew with us at church, and Auntie lent him half her hymn-book, and I lent Arethusa half of mine. How I blessed pews, and pew-openers, and hymn-books!

Why is it, let me ask, that every one feels entitled to offer another his or her hymn-book, not only when they are in the pew together, but often when they are each in separate pews, and often two pews off? It is all the same whether you are short or long-sighted, whether you can sing or not; let the psalm be given out, and the organ or harmonium growl, and any one who has a hymn-book is not easy till he has got a partner who is hymn-bookless. Still more cha-

ritable are they who, sitting in a pew behind you, tap you on the back, or scratch your neck, to hand you a hymn-book. If there were arrest for debt on Sunday the first process would add a new terror to church, as surely as the second suggests a wasp or hornet getting down your collar behind. You turn round in dismay, and find it is only an old lady or a young lady, a marchioness or a maid-of-all-work, with a hymn-book which she wishes to lend you. Take it you must, and you must hold it open, and try to sing; and when the singing is over you must return it gracefully, with a bow, to its owner. If you don't, you are set down for a heathen brute. I ask again, Why is it? If you meet a lady in the street, or in a railway carriage, and you sneeze, she does not at once insist on your sharing her handkerchief. If you have no cold, and she has a novel, and you none, she does not instantly ask you to read it with her. I ask for the third time, Why is this exception made in the case of prayer and specially of hymn-books?

However, there they were in our pew. Fate had thrown us under their umbrella, and we were obliged to them; and now Fate had made them borrow our hymn-books, and they were obliged to us. There I was, standing side by side with Arethusa, she singing, and very well too, out of

my hymn-book. It was 'Jerusalem the Golden,' I remember. Had I the power I would have changed it into 'O Ilfracombe the Golden,' the 'O' being added to fill up the odd syllable; and there was Colonel Chichester standing close up to my Aunt—a perfect happy family; the only drawback being that Brooks and the rest of the servants were all in the front row of the gallery, taking note of what we did.

If I blessed the umbrella before, I blessed the hymn-books tenfold now. I am afraid that I neglected the one for the other, though I ought to have remembered that you need a hymn-book only once a-week at Ilfracombe, while you want an umbrella ten times a-day.

But the hymn-books had it all their own way that Sunday. We walked home together as far as Wildersmouth House, and when we parted my Aunt said she should be very happy to call on Miss Chichester, if Colonel Chichester would allow it.

'Nothing would give him greater pleasure,' said the Colonel; and I could not help remarking that as he said those few words he did *not* turn as red as a turkey-cock, like a certain young gentleman whom I could have named.

With that we parted, and Auntie and I went home to luncheon.

She said little or nothing,—certainly nothing about the Chichesters. She did not even wonder this time where they lived.

All that afternoon I spent in my own room, nominally reading divinity, but really humming ‘Jerusalem the Golden,’ and thinking of Arethusa Chichester; but I beg you all to take notice that I was not the least in love with her—I only wanted to pay her off for laughing at me.

CHAPTER XXI.

HOW I SAW SOMETHING OF ARETHUSA.

WHEN these visits passed between my Aunt and Miss Chichester I was artful enough not to go with my Aunt, though she asked me to do so. I had to read a play of Sophocles, or the First Georgic, or something; I hardly know what. I made a classical excuse, and it passed muster. I think I spent all the time my Aunt was away in holding the hymn-book just as I had held it when Arethusa held the other half. I knew the very spot where her tiny thumb had rested, and I am ashamed to say I kissed it. Very silly and very natural! Boys were boys then, and girls girls. We were not so wise as young people are now-a-days. We felt more and thought less; and I rather think we had the best of it. There was false feeling and sham affection then as now; but the genuine article was, at any rate, sometime to be found. It was with love then as with antiques and objects of art. There were shams and forgeries then, and many bought

them and were taken in; but it was possible to go into a dealer's shop and to find a genuine bit of china, a majolica plate, a piece of silver, a cabinet, untouched and unrestored. Now, you may search London, and find nothing but sham antiques, and so it was with love then, and so it is with love now. We were great fools. We squandered our affections recklessly, and often on worthless objects; but, at any rate, we sometimes got something genuine and natural.

But to come back to Ilfracombe. When my Aunt returned, she said that Miss Chichester seemed a nice girl. 'Very pretty, too,' she thought her. As for Colonel Chichester, who should he turn out to be but the very 'Jack Chichester of the Guards,' the friend of my Uncle Mandeville before he married?

'He was wild enough then,' said my Aunt; 'but he seems a very courteous old gentleman now, and time, no doubt, has brought with it repentance for his former follies.'

'Did he ask after me, Aunt?'

This was all I dared to say of the Chichesters.

'Oh! yes. He spoke of you as his "young friend," who had given him the brandy-and-water on board the steamer, which did him so much good. I thought it had been tea you brought on deck, Edward?'

‘Dr. Mindererus said brandy-and-water was what we were to take if we were sea-sick, and I thought what was good for us must be good for the Colonel. That was why I brought it. It seemed to do him great good.’

‘Exactly what he said to-day,’ said my Aunt. ‘If it had not been for that glass of brandy-and-water he did not think he should have reached Ilfracombe alive.’

In a day or so Miss Chichester came to call on my Aunt, and her father came with her. When he saw me he said he was glad to see me; and Arethusa, for the first time, looked as though she were glad to see me, and we all talked and laughed, and so the visit ended very happily.

That evening we all met at Wildersmouth, for a wonder not in the rain. The green umbrella was not unfolded. It remained unnoticed in the Colonel’s hand. Then we sat down upon the rocks, and the Colonel told us some stories of the Burmese War; rather in the tom-tom and gum-gum style, but such stories were not then so well known as they are now. India was an unknown land. Faith in the pagoda tree was still firm. In fact, we were less accustomed to a diet of curry and rice then than we are now, and nothing pleased us more than an occasional dish of it. My Aunt was infinitely amused at the

stories, and I would have been delighted had the Colonel told her the first joke in Joe Miller as his own, or tried to palm off upon us—as we have known some bold bad story-tellers in these latter days,—Mr. Canning's stale story of the elephants coming last into the ark, because they stayed to pack up their trunks.

When the story-telling was over we saw them home to their cottage,—Combe Martin Cottage, I remember it was called,—and we turned back and walked home and went to bed; and the morning and the evening were the first day.

When I came to reflect,—which act of the intellect did not begin till I crept into bed,—how I had behaved to Arethusa and she to me, I could not call to mind anything which showed her that I had any leaning towards her, and still less anything on her part which could at all prove that she cared in the least for me. Young people are carried along by their natural guardians and protectors like logs on a current, or bathers in a strong tideway. The bathers think, and the logs would think if they could, that they are getting on swimmingly, and that they are having their way; but it is the irresistible current that carries them both on, until it lands them somewhere far from what they hoped. In this case, both Arethusa and I were playthings of

the Colonel and my Aunt Mandeville; we had as yet no wishes of our own, and the elders did with us pretty much as they liked. When young people get so far as to have a will of their own, they soon find they have a current of their own, or a mind of their own, which sets right against the current of their temporal pastors and masters, and causes great storms and high seas of passion in which many gallant hopes go down, as richly-laden vessels founder in a gale.

For the present we all swam together in harmony. The elders not only proposed but disposed, and we were only too happy to follow. Neither my Aunt nor Colonel Chichester dreamt that either I or Arethusa could think of falling in love with one another. My Aunt considered me still a boy; and as for the Colonel, the last thing which breaks on a father's mind is the bitter fact, of which every one around him has been long aware, that his darling daughter has made up her mind to exchange his society for that of a husband. The very jealousy of my Aunt had blinded her eyes. She saw nothing but me, and it never crossed her mind that I could think of any woman as my wife till she had first thought of her for me.

These worthy protectors of such inflammable elements as two human hearts, than which at

twenty not even nitro-glycerine or dynamite is more explosive, did everything that in them lay to bring Arethusa and me together when once the ice was broken. We went off on ponies to Linton, along the cliff, enjoying the finest scenery in England; we lingered at Heddonmouth, and had a picnic *partie carrée* on the shore; we stayed two days at the delightful Valley of Rocks Hotel; we rode up the valley; we walked down to Linmouth, and very hot we were walking back; we rode back to Ilfracombe by moonlight, losing the way and not arriving till one A.M.

Well might Brooks hold up his hands and exclaim:

‘Missus out till one in the morning in this damp part! Whatever would Dr. Mindererus say?’

Then we rode to Morte Bay and Woollacomb Sands, and saw Mortehoe Church, where one of Becket’s assassins lies; and coming back, Arethusa dropped her brooch, and we both turned back to look for it, and I found it and pinned it on and pricked my finger. Ah me! what a sweet wound was that!’

Then, growing bolder, we set off in my Aunt’s carriage, which, after lengthened travels, had reached Ilfracombe, and drove to Barnstaple and

Bideford, and Clovelly and Clovelly Court, and Hartland Point. We were away nearly a week, for, though the distances were not great, the horses were as great slugs as the coachman; and as for Brooks, who undertook to be beforehand for us with our light portmanteaus, somehow or other he was always in the wrong place, and we lost hours upon hours waiting for him.

All this was delightful, only the time went so very fast. Sunday was no sooner gone than it was back again. They had got their own hymn-books by that time, but they still sat in our pew, the Colonel next to my Aunt,—of course I made way for my elders,—then Arethusa, and last I, keeping the fifth seat against all comers. It is in a crowded church, with pushing pew-openers, almost as anxious an office as guarding the 'siege perilous' in a tournament against all comers. Sometimes though, however wide we spread ourselves out, we were invaded. There were no crinolines in those days—that utterly extinct, or half-extinct, or curtailed article of female attire had not come in, it was before it was even born or thought of, as the nurses say. Still less were our looped-up, brooched-up behind dresses known. Ladies' 'coats,' as my Aunt used to call them, were short and rather scanty; when the wind they showed the shape a good deal more

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than some of our modern umbrella cases. It was hard for a lady then to spread herself out, but Arethusa and my Aunt did it as well as they could. The old Colonel puffed himself up till he grew as red as a turkey-cock, and looked twice as savage. I did my best to scare away all comers. Sometimes, though, we did not succeed. I remember once, a man came and remained through the service, but disappeared just at the end of the last psalm. He vanished as suddenly as a ghost; though next to him, I never missed him. You will say I was looking at Arethusa. I scorn the imputation. He was gone, however, and returned no more that day. Next Sunday the same man came again. I watched him all through the last verse of the last psalm. It was a Hallelujah psalm, and lo! at the end of the singing, just at the 'jah,' the fifth sitter vanished; withered away and glided out more like a ghost than anything else. His face worked as though he had something to say, but he made no mockery of holding a handkerchief up to his nose, nor did he cough or sneeze violently. No; he quietly glided out—I believe that preterite is 'glode'—and was gone.

'Very odd man, that,' said the Colonel.

'I suppose,' said my Aunt, 'the poor man was ill or something. Perhaps he felt faint.'

'Very odd man,' repeated the Colonel. 'Odder

still he should feel faint two Sundays running, just at the very same part of the service. Reminds of a man in the 200th Bengal Fusileers, who ran away regularly from two affairs in the Burmese war. His time was the very first shot on the enemy's side.'

Nothing more was said, and the third Sunday came. At the end of the last psalm, at the very last versicle, away faded the fifth sitter in the same spectral way. We all wondered a good deal at his strange manners, and could not at all explain it; but I have lived a little longer now, and feel sure that our fifth sitter, who was a most respectable-looking man, and, for aught I know, may have come to church in his own gig, must have been the founder and apostle of that great heretical sect who cannot bear bad sermons, and went about the country protesting against them in this quiet way, and now his silent leaven has leavened a great mass of followers.

The Colonel was of a different way of thinking. He had not the eye to discern a true prophet. He would have served him after his own fashion—that is, if he had found him in cantonments in Bundelcund, he would have made him sit out three sermons and given him three hundred lashes afterwards.

Yes! the time went very fast, week by week.

month by month, till July, August, and most of September were over. On the 23rd of October 'the House' met again, so that I had not long to stay at Ilfracombe. Perhaps you think I had been making the best of my opportunities by making love to Arethusa? Have I not told you that I was very shy? and what is life, the moralists tell us, but a waste of opportunities. I beg you to believe that I never said one word about love to Arethusa for three months. Why should I? We were always together; she saw no one else. There was a literate of St. Bees,—a very industrious worker, as you may imagine, by the hive he had flown from,—who used to come down to the beach, stretching his gaunt limbs, as you may have seen a fly, and for that matter a bee, come out and stretch its legs and wings in a warm October day. He was slovenly in his dress, wore highlows, and dirty white cotton socks, which used to hang down over his highlows. A modest, unassuming man, a great gatherer of sea-anemones and searcher for pebbles. We never took any notice of him, nor he of us, except to get out of one another's way. He is now a bishop. Don't tell me that a literate of St. Bees has never been a bishop. I tell you he is a bishop, and what is more, richly deserves to be one.

What am I? Listen a little longer, and you

shall hear as much of my life as I choose to tell you.

So I had no rivals; no fear. It never occurred to me that Arethusa could care for any one else. All I knew was, that I saw her every day, and was happy. It was not till a week before we were to part, that I began to see that all this sitting 'on rocks,' all this 'musing o'er flood and field,' must have an end. We used to sit side by side looking over the Bristol Channel, by day, or till late at night watching the furnaces near Swansea, very often without saying a word. It was not a week before all this was to end. I say, that a light seemed to break upon me, and I felt, 'in ten days you two will have to part.'

The light had been there all the while, as though the dawn should say, while it is not midnight, 'in four hours I shall be with you.' Who cares at midnight how soon the day will dawn, and what cared I a month off that, or four weeks? I should lose Arethusa. But a week off, the light shone and the dawn broke, just as hell blazes before the deathbed sinner; and the parting took a terrible reality to me, just as the Day of Judgment looms at the very door of the unrepentant on his death-bed.

What did Arethusa think? What a silly question! What should a well-brought-up young

lady think of a man who has never dared to ask her what she thinks? No doubt she thought a great deal more than she said, a very easy task, involving no great waste of thought, for she had said nothing. Of course it is well understood that a young lady, though she says nothing, can very well show her dislike for a young man. If, therefore, she makes no outward and visible sign of inward aversion,—if she allows him to sit by her ever so long without changing her seat,—if she is up before breakfast and meets him quite by accident,—now-a-days if she gives him her photograph, though this may mean very little, as when Prince Arthur presented his photograph to the Council of Military Education for passing him into Woolwich Academy,—nay, even in the old prosaic fashion of working him slippers. In these, and many ways, does a girl show that she has no aversion to a man; only men are so silly, they will not understand that not being averse is a very long way from love. They will jump to conclusions, and many a man has had his affections blighted because the girl who worked him a pair of slippers, or knitted him a comforter, afterwards refused an offer of his hand,—the hand, be it observed, in nine cases out of ten, being empty.

So there I was, knowing absolutely nothing of

Arethusa's feelings, except that we had been together three months. Some of you young ladies may call me a 'muff,' and so I was, no doubt, a muff, a kind of man which has been defined as 'a thing that holds a pretty girl's hand without squeezing it.' Nay, I swear that I had never even got so far in these three months as to be in the position of a muff. I had never even held Arethusa's hand. I don't call shaking hands, 'holding hands.' You all know it is quite another thing.

One day of the week had passed. It was a bitter day. My Aunt despatched the coachman and the horses, and wrote home to the servants to have the beds aired and the Hall ready for us. Brooks was already in a flurry, partly with packing, and more at the thought of getting to what he called 'civilised parts,' by which he understood a house where he could have more of his own way, lord it over the under-servants at dinner in the servants' hall, and meet his equals after dinner in the housekeeper's room over a glass of my Aunt's old port. I have no doubt that the thought ever uppermost in his mind was that he should soon again have his 'meals regular.'

'Master Edward, Master Edward!' he cried as I came back from bathing, 'missis is going back by the steamer this day week, and in ten

days we shall be all back at Mandeville Hall. Won't that be nice, Master Edward ?'

Very nice. I wonder if the lout ever had an Arethusa to get him his meals regular ?

I rather think that I stayed in to read,—that is to say, to sulk,—all that morning.

At luncheon my Aunt added fresh fuel to my fire by saying, as though it were the most natural thing in the world :

'Next week, in fact, this very day week, Edward, we will go back by the *Diana* to Bristol, on our way to home. I shall be very sorry to part with Colonel Chichester and his daughter.'

'So shall I, Aunt.'

I was not hypocrite enough to say that I was glad to go back to Mandeville Hall. I felt shocked—yes, shocked!—at the cruel way in which my Aunt spoke of parting from Arethusa, and I felt outraged at the calm proposal to go back to our own home.

Then my Aunt went on to say, in the most provoking way : 'One would almost wish never to have met people at all ; it is so painful to part with them.' But she said it in a passionless, business-like manner, that showed how little she felt the force of what she was saying.

After luncheon I walked down to Wildersmouth, and there I found Arethusa picking up

seaweed, as she used to pick it up every day. What she did with the weeds she gathered no one knew, but there she always was every day, gathering seaweeds for an hour or so. Her father was reading 'The Times,' which it was then thought a wonder to get two days old. Dear me! what pre-Adamite days those were, if we reflect on our express mail trains and telegrams!

Arethusa had already been told of our intended departure. My Aunt had met her in the morning, when I was sulking, or my Aunt's maid had met her maid, open-mouthed, to tell a bit of news, and glad to get away from the land of clouted cream and squab-pie and cider.

'So you are going away next week, Mr. Halfacre?' said Arethusa, plucking the *Lophospermum Erubescens*—I know that is not the name of a seaweed, but I have not the Nature Printed Seaweeds by me to refer to—to pieces which she held in her hand.

'Yes; we are.' That was all I said.

'Well, everything must come to an end, and so, I suppose, must our visit to Ilfracombe; I am sure, though, I don't know when we shall go away from this dull place. If we do this year as we have done before, we shall go and pay some shooting visits in South Devon, and return to town about Christmas.'

So she called it a dull place ; but whether it was dull from what it had been, or from what it was to be, I could not tell ; but I ventured to say, ' Whenever I go I shall feel very dull, too.'

Arethusa caught me up in an instant.

' I did not say that I should be dull. I only said it was a dull place, a fact which you cannot deny.'

I was not going to argue the point with her, so I replied, in a fatuous sort of way :

' Yes, I daresay it is a dull place ; but—'

Here I verily believe I was about to say, ' But with you, Miss Chichester, what place could be dull ?' But at that most critical moment the Colonel's head appeared round the rock, and proposed a walk to Watermouth. I do not know that I ever felt my respect for Arethusa's father so sorely tried as it was by this most cruel proposition. Why could he not have gone on reading about the Bombardment of Acre at a time when we were within an ace of going to war with France ; were it only for five minutes longer, until I had settled matters with Arethusa, and, at least, found out whether she cared for me. But there was no help for it. To Watermouth we all three walked, and from Watermouth we came back, my heart bleeding—I suppose you will not allow me to say my mouth was watering

—all the while with a desire to be alone once more with Arethusa. When we got home it was late ; there was only just time to dress for dinner ; but it was full moon that night, and we had agreed that we would all meet about nine o'clock at Wildersmouth.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW I SAID SOMETHING TO ARETHUSA.

I WONDER if my Aunt Mandeville thought me dull at dinner ; I had scarce a word to say.

‘Poor fellow ! you are fagged with reading all the morning, and then by being dragged off to Watermouth by that Colonel, whose constitution seems quite iron-bound. To see him row in a dingy is something marvellous. Eat your dinner, and don’t talk. You will soon be better. When you get away from this dull place you will soon recover your spirits, and feel the benefit of change of air. In fact, I wonder how we have been all so well in this damp nook. It certainly has rained every other day. It must be a dreadful place for rheumatism in the winter.’

So my Aunt ran on, I all the while saying nothing, while Brooks had the insolence to make a face at me behind my Aunt’s chair when she spoke of the dampness and rheumatic character of Ilfracombe.

'Drink your wine, Master Edward, it will do you good,' said Brooks, in a husky whisper, as he saw that I had left my glass of port untasted. This, my young readers will remember, was before the days of Gladstone claret.

We had figs at dessert, and I will tell you how I remember that very trivial event. All that part of Devonshire is famous for figs. Go to Clovelly, and buy some off the old Abbey wall, if you doubt my word; and my Aunt, as she took one, said something of Devonshire being the Garden of Eden. I said mechanically 'yes;' but it was some time, in the sad state of heart and brain-softening in which I then was, before I put the figs and the Garden of Eden together, and reflected that our first parents must have had figs if they had fig-leaves; for I will not pay the fig-trees of Eden the bad compliment of supposing that they were all as barren as their descendant in the Gospels.

That was why I remember that we had figs at dessert that day. North Devon had been to me the Garden of Eden. My Aunt sewed the figs fast on to that blissful recollection, and there the figs have been dangling in my memory ever since. Whenever I think of figs I think of the Garden of Eden, and the fall of our first parents, in whose footsteps we have all so faithfully

followed; and when I think of the Garden of Eden I think of Ilfracombe.

Just about nine my Aunt and I set out, Brooks standing at the door and hoping we should not catch the 'rheumatiz.' We saw Arethusa and her father seated on the rocks; on one particular rock on the other side of the little stream which there spreads itself out over the sand and pebbles before it loses itself in the sea.

There on the other side of the stream of that Jordan that divided me from the promised land, I saw her who made the promised land alone worth having. I ran from my Aunt's side and thought I would leap over the stream as I had leapt it a hundred times before; when, just as I took off in my leap, my right foot rested on a round stone, I twisted and sprained my ankle as I leapt, and, what was worse, on alighting on the other side I fell on the sprained ankle, and crushed it up completely. Down I fell just at the foot of Arethusa's rock, and there, what with pain, and rage, and shame, I fainted. When I came to myself, the old Colonel was sprinkling my forehead with sea-water, and my Aunt and Arethusa stood by me looking as pale as ghosts in the moonlight, but then it might only have been the moonlight.

‘Gad!’ said the Colonel. He never swore more than ‘Gad,’ and then only on great occasions, like Brooks with his ‘Drat it’ and ‘Odd-rabbetern!’ ‘We did not expect at our next meeting to pick you up a fainting man. Toosy saw you first floundering and falling in the moonlight, and she was first down from the rock to help you. Young feet are nimbler than old bones.’

He did not know how he was healing my heart by his words. It seemed that the agony of the sprain was not worth thinking of. So she had been the first to see me, and the first to fly to help me from the rock.

‘How are you, Edward?’ said my Aunt. ‘Does your ankle pain you very much?’

‘A good deal, Aunt. But never mind, I shall soon be all right again. What is a sprained ankle, after all?’

‘Let me tell you,’ said the Colonel, ‘a sprained ankle is often much worse than a broken leg. There was a fellow in my regiment who sprained his ankle out tiger-hunting, and he was never able to march afterwards—had to sell out and leave the service. Saw him last year at Buxton, hobbling about.’

I couldn’t stand, so Brooks came down, ‘fit to catch his death of cold in the dark,’ with the

two footmen, and they made a sort of litter out of a plank and shawls, and I was stretched on it, and so carried up to Wildersmouth.

Brooks, when they got me up to bed, and while he was superintending my undressing, said he 'never see such a limb in his life, all mashed and jammed like; more like jelly than flesh.'

That was the report with which the wretch rushed downstairs and sickened my Aunt. When I myself looked at my leg, I never saw anything so swollen and misshapen. The Colonel offered to go for a doctor, and in a little while the head *Æsculapius* of Ilfracombe appeared. He was a nice, pleasant man. Poor fellow, he was dead when I was last there.

He merely said it was a bad sprain. He was no alarmist, but just what a doctor should be—frightening no one, and not frightened himself; putting a good face on the ugliest case, till its features got too bad to be concealed from the patient or the patient's friends. In a few days he said he hoped I should be in a fair way to recovery; at present I must be quiet, and on no account put my leg to the ground,—a most unnecessary caution, for I could no more have walked than flown upon that leg.

After the doctor had made his report, and departed to get some leeches, the Colonel also took

his leave, and I knew that Arethusa had been in the house all the while. I heard him call to her to come, and as I lay with the window open, I heard her dainty feet trip along the gravel-walk. The gate slammed after them, and they were gone into the bright moonlight night.

My Aunt was with me as soon as I was undressed. She was with me when the doctor came, and though she went downstairs with him, she returned almost immediately, and insisted on sitting up with me the greater part of the night. It was a great fuss to make about a sprain, but then I had scarcely ever been ill, and I was all in all to my Aunt.

Next morning the limb was not quite so big, but it was very red; and when the doctor came, he said he was sorry he hadn't sent more leeches, but it was too late now, so he deluged the limb with evaporating lotions with such effect, that in a day or two the swelling went down, and the whole limb, nearly up to the knee, grew black, and blue, and green.

As I lay in bed I remember doing a sum of Profit and Loss, and trying to find out whether I was better off with regard to Arethusa for having sprained my ankle. The conclusion I came to was that I was much better off. First, and foremost, Arethusa had shown that she cared for me

by rushing down the rock to help me. I had in fact got my question answered without putting it to her. Next, the accident had thrown my Aunt and the Chichesters closer together. Every day the Colonel and Arethusa came to inquire for me. I knew their footsteps long before they rang the bell. The Colonel strode along, grinding the gravel as though he were a bison or a rhinoceros trampling the ground. Arethusa's feet pattered over it like a gazelle; and though last, not least, the sprain would surely delay our departure. It was like a reprieve to a condemned criminal: he not only feels respited for the time, but also that no one will have the cruelty to hang him after he has been once reprieved. A week is everything in love, and a week more with Arethusa seemed an eternity of enjoyment.

I knew we should not go home so soon, by the sour face of Brooks, the morning after the accident. It needed not his words to tell me the state of the case.

'This here sad accident, Master Edward, have had the effect of countermanding our departure, which it was to have been next Wednesday. Missis have sent to the steamboat, and ordered it for the week after next. A sad trial to us poor servants, Master Edward, to have to stay here all along of your leg. They have no proper

beer in these parts, and the cider as they drink instead is like swallowing a carving-knife — it do lie so sharp and cold on the pit of the stomach.'

I got up, you may be sure, as soon as ever I could. I was not going to waste those precious ten days in bed. I gave my Aunt no rest. I must go out. I was pining for the fresh air down at Wildersmouth. It wasn't the same air at all at Wildersmouth House. It lost all its saltness and savour in blowing up the valley. Could I not ride on a pony, on a side-saddle? This was a bright idea. My Aunt was only too glad to humour me in every way. A pony, as quiet as a lamb, and a side-saddle were got, and so, with the sound leg in the stirrup, and the lame one hanging over the pommel, I made a triumphal procession from the house to the cove; and there, to my great joy, I met Arethusa and her father. Aunt Mandeville, I need not say, walked by the pony's side.

To see Arethusa was something, and to thank her even publicly for coming to help me was another something. I hope I thanked her gracefully,—my Aunt called it 'a very pretty speech.' Arethusa bowed, and blushed, and muttered something about its being 'a pleasure as well as a duty,' and her father only thought of her

keen eyes. He believed she could 'see to pick up a pin in the dark,' and as for running down a rock, 'she was as fleet and sure-footed as a chamois.'

So far, so well; but let any one try to make love off a pony with a lame leg,—I mean with a lame leg off a pony, of course; and let him try to do it in the presence of the natural guardians and protectors of both the lovers, and he will find it no easy work. Besides, the pony, that innocent, as quiet as a lamb, was as obstinate as a mule. He was a silly, unpoetical pony. No Bucephalus or Pegasus would ever have sprung from him. He cared not a bit for Wildersmouth and its surf, throwing sea-weeds, red and green, at your feet at every wave. What he wanted was grass. Several times he tried to bolt across the Wilder into the meadow beyond. If I could only have persuaded Arethusa to bolt with us, it would have been well; but who ever heard of a young lady not only running—that one has heard of—but actually leaping after her lover. Arethusa neither ran nor leapt. She called the pony 'stupid,' and offered to lead him. Her offer was accepted, but she only led the brute round and round the cove, my aunt and her father being in close attendance, and so the time soon came that, what with the pony's fits and starts, I

had had quite enough of riding on a side-saddle for that day at least, and I was very glad to get back to Wildersmouth House, and be carried up to bed.

Next day was a great improvement, I only used the pony to ride down to Wildersmouth, and then I was lifted off and laid on shawls just above high-water mark. There I lay all the afternoon, and Arethusa sat beside me. The Colonel and my Aunt sat close by, but they were engaged in playing *piquette*, a game very conducive to disputes, and therefore very engrossing. While they were hard at some discussion as to the score, I was thinking how I might best score my name on the heart of Arethusa, or so get it into her head that she should never be able to throw it out. I was thinking, I say, for in this as in all matters through life, my ingrained shyness has been a great drawback to me.

‘I hope you feel much better, Mr. Halfacre?’

‘Yes, thank you, much better.’ Then, after a pause—taking advantage of the dispute in the game, which just then waxed warm,—‘How good it was of you, Miss Chichester, to show so much sympathy for one so undeserving of it as myself.’

‘You forget the Christian precept, to do as

you would be done by. I only did for you what I should expect you to do for me.'

'For you, and for no one else?'

'That I call a Heathen, and not a Christian precept. You ought to do it not only for me, but for the least and poorest Christian in the world.'

'But suppose I would rather be a Heathen, and do something for you, than a Christian and let all the rest of the world share it.'

'I shan't allow you to suppose any such wicked thing,' said Arethusa. 'Besides, how do you know that I showed any more sympathy for you than I should for any one else under like circumstances?'

'I inferred it from what your father said; from the very first words that I heard when I recovered my senses.'

'Ah! but one ought not to be too quick in drawing inferences. That is behaving like a horse that *will* start as soon as the carriage-door is opened, and will not wait for any one to get in. Inferences sometimes run away with one.'

'I am sure I wish you were an inference,' said I, with an excess of impudence of which none but very shy people are ever guilty; and then, seeing that I was putting the case as though she were going to run away with me, I blushed

deeply, and said, 'No; that is not what I mean. I meant to say that I wished I were an inference.'

'It doesn't much matter what you mean,' said Arethusa. 'I should say though that you are hasty in drawing inferences. As for running away, it is clear that it is high time that I should run away from you. You know you can't follow me.'

With these words she tripped away as light as Ariel over the yellow sands, and as elfish and uncanny. In another minute she was perched on the top of the very rock whence she had flown to my rescue, and there she remained for some time surveying the scene of her victory and my defeat, and, as it seemed to me, glorying in her dexterity in evading an awkward question. I remember, too, that as she stood there the western sun fell on her, and her rich brown hair shone with a glory of its own, as she stood transfigured, to my longing eyes. Then she slowly turned away, gliding down on the other side of the rock to reappear at the furthest end of the cove, under the Capstan Hill, seemingly deep in her favourite pursuit—seaweed-gathering.

'Where's Toosy? What, left you alone to go and pick up that rubbish? She was here but a minute ago.' Thus spoke the Colonel, quite for-

getting that time flies quite as fast in disputes at cards as in lovers' quarrels.

'Come back, Toosy! come back!' cried out her father. And she came back; but she never came close to me, and there I lay, feeling that I had lost another chance; nay, that I had lost the assurance that her father had given me. Had she not resolved all her sympathy for me into mere Christian love—diluted and watered her feeling for me by making me share it with all the beggars in the universe. Out upon such sympathy! And then, how cruelly she turned on me when I put my foot into it! Lame as I was that was a most unkind cut to compare me to a restless runaway horse.

Added to all this, I had evidently scared and frightened her. She did not choose to sit by a man so shy and awkward as to be capable of putting her to the blush by such bold suggestions. Nor was this all. I had to confess that she had maintained her self-possession throughout, continuing calm, while I was warm, and fairly defeating me on ground which I myself had chosen for the attack.

No! I was as little pleased with myself as she was plainly displeased with me. I turned over and groaned. My Aunt thought it came from my ankle, but it came straight from the

heart. 'Did I feel cold?' Yes, I did. I had lain there too long. I should like to go home. So they laid what was left of my proud hopes on the pony, and I went home in no very amiable frame of mind.

CHAPTER XXIII.

HOW I PARTED FROM ARETHUSA.

ALL that night I lay awake resolving, and the sum of my resolution was that I would have it 'out' with Arethusa the very next time we were alone.

My Aunt saw that I was wan and haggard next morning. It was more air that I needed. I must go down to Wildersmouth as soon as might be after breakfast. I could have hobbled down with a stick; but for another day I was condemned to the pony and the side-saddle, punished with my own invention, 'hoised with my own petard.' The bed on the shore was made, and strewn with wraps as before. My Aunt was writing letters, and I devoutly hoped that the Colonel was in his counting-house counting out his money, or even usurping the Queen's rights, and eating bread and honey—doing anything, in short, except escorting his daughter down to the beach.

Guess my surprise when he came, and came

alone. I gazed to see Arethusa sailing after him like the gallant ship, from which she took her name, in chase of the *Belle Poule*. In vain. No 'undraped eye,' as the modest Bermudians say for naked eye; no binocular, night, or fog-glass could discern her. She was nowhere to be seen—neither on the rock of last night, nor up on the Capstan Hill. Where was she? She would soon come. She, too, was writing letters—perhaps writing to me. Vain suppositions and questions, soon scattered to the winds by the Colonel, who came up, and asked, in the politest manner possible, after my Aunt's health, and how my ankle felt. They were both very well—that is, my Aunt was very well, and my ankle better. Then, in turn, I inquired how Miss Chichester was, and whether she had stayed out too long last night in the moonlight.

'You're quite right to say in the moonlight,' said the Colonel. 'Nothing is so bad as the moonlight. Talk of the sun, the sun is nothing to the moon. Meat and milk turn sooner in moonlight than sunlight; and as for sleeping in the moonlight, it's the worst thing you can do. There was a fellow of ours who fell asleep out in the moonlight in India after dinner. He was stone-blind ever afterwards, and quite dazed in wits. But we didn't sleep in it last night.'

So he ran on thinking of the moonlight, while I was thinking of Arethusa.

After his lecture on the moon came to an end, I said :

‘I am glad Miss Chichester took no harm from the night air. Will she come down to the beach this morning?’

‘What, don’t you know?’ said the Colonel. ‘Toosy went off this morning with her maid. I forget. It was all settled the day after you sprained your ankle. She’s gone to spend a month with her Aunt Buller in South Devon. You won’t see her again in Ilfracombe. Didn’t she say good-bye? Just like her. She hates leave-taking.’

I am sure that when I heard this I must have looked like an idiot. Here was another effect of my shyness. I had scared her away, and so lost the very opportunity of saying something tender, and getting a response. Of course she would have bid me good-bye if I hadn’t been fool enough to frighten her away. As for her Aunt Buller, I wished her seven thousand fathoms down in the sea, if it is so deep, and deeper, ten times deeper, if it is deeper still.

I don’t know what I said to the Colonel or what he said to me. I know when my Aunt

joined us a few minutes afterwards, that he said he feared 'his young friend had been working too hard.' I did not look so well as I did a week or two before. My Aunt quite agreed with the Colonel, and then they both went on to agree that we had all had enough of Ilfracombe. 'Even Toosy,' said the Colonel, 'hadn't been well of late. A visit to her Aunt Buller would do her good.'

'No doubt of it,' said my Aunt. 'There is nothing so good for young people as change when they feel dull and hipped. Edward will feel all the better for a week or so at Mandeville Hall before he goes back to Oxford.'

My Aunt never would understand the 'ups' and 'downs' of undergraduate life. She always talked of my going 'down' from Oxford as 'coming home,' and of my going 'up' as 'going back.'

'Just the same with Toosy,' said the Colonel. 'She'll be all the better with her Aunt Buller. The 10th Lancers are quartered at Exeter, and as Aunt Buller is very hospitable, she will soon have amusement enough.'

'Do the 10th dance yet?' asked my Aunt. 'It used to be a joke against the regiment, when I was a girl, that they were too fine to dance.'

'Dance!' said the Colonel. 'Gad! I should

think they did. They have always danced since I knew them. I know they dance now, for "Toosy" danced with several of them at the Hampshire Ball last winter. They were quartered at Winchester then, and only had the route given them for Exeter in the spring. There are some fine young fellows among them; just what Light Cavalry ought to be.'

'I daresay,' said my Aunt. 'They always were a dashing, smart regiment. How nice it will be for Miss Chichester!'

Thus did the estimable pair, in the innocence of their hearts, go on by the hour, and torture me, Edward Halfacre, with the pangs of jealousy. As for Aunt Buller, drowning was too good for her. I could now have impaled her, or burnt her to death, or minced her, or brushed her to death, as they do in China; or thrown her, as Ella of Northumbria did Ragnar Lodbrog, into a pit full of snakes; or stripped her, and buttered her, and left her to be stung to death by gnats on an island off the Musquito shore. It was bad enough to take Arethusa from me, but worse to expose her to the fascinations of a whole cavalry regiment. How cruel, too, to let me know, in that accidental way, that she could find old partners, and nice ones too, 'fine young fellows' in the 10th!

There was no denying it. I groaned aloud, much in the same way as one of the major prophets might have done ; a good loud groan, no sob or sigh ; no woman's work, but a most masculine groan.

'Gad!' said the Colonel, 'I scarcely ever heard such a groan as that, except when one picks up the wounded after an affair.'

He never used the word battle.

'Are you ill, Edward?' asked my Aunt.

'No, Aunt ; only my ankle.'

What a convenient thing that sprain was ! Here I held up my crushed ankle before their eyes, and they could not see through it into my heart.

Well, there was no denying it. Arethusa was gone, and gone without a word. I was ready enough to go now, and only too sorry that we had to stay another week. I discarded the pony, tried to stand on the lame foot, and found it much stronger than I could have thought. Then I began to hobble about on crutches, and, let me tell you, no cripple of the dark ages ever limped so devoutly to St. James of Compostella, to St. Thomas of Canterbury, or to our Lady Walsingham or Loretto, as I did to every place where I had sat with Arethusa ; but as each pilgrim has his own pet shrine at which he offers up his

most particular prayers, and trusts to get absolution for his bosom sins, so the centre of my devotions, round which all lesser acts of worship revolved, was that rock at Wildersmouth under which we crouched when the umbrella became our master of the ceremonies; on which Arethusa sat and flew to my help as I fell; and on which I last saw her in the sunlight on the afternoon when I scared her away from my side. In the middle ages I should have retired from the world, scooped me out a cell from the rock, or builded me a hermitage of boulders from the beach, and so, subsisting on seaweed and my own nails, I should have spent a life of penitence in the odour of sanctity; in the nineteenth century, this hard-hearted generation of reality, I had to go back to Oxford and take my degree.

And now we are leaving Ilfracombe. The same steamer, the sea-slug *Diana*, the same captain, the same mate, steward, and cabin-boy, the same gig, the same rude seamen, the same 'lubbers,' and 'sea-cooks,' applied to Brooks and hurting his feelings. The same sea-sickness on the part of the servants, and the same good behaviour on that of me and my Aunt. There was even another leg of boiled mutton, exactly like the one we had going down, the same raw cook-

ing, the same red gravy. Everything was the same except that there was no Colonel Chichester, and no Arethusa, and that the weather was perfectly fine.

My Aunt was in unusual spirits. Colonel Chichester, with his wonted politeness, had gone off with us in the gig to see the last of us. He even repeated what he had said as we landed, 'he hoped he should see me again somewhere.' To which my Aunt, as I thought most properly and gracefully said, she 'hoped she should soon see him and Miss Chichester at Mandeville Hall.'

'We are birds of passage,' he said, 'without any fixed home of our own, except in London. Here to-day and gone to-morrow,

"To-day red
To-morrow dead,"

as the German proverb says. I did think of going to Leamington this winter to hunt; if so, we shall be sure to pay our respects at Mandeville Hall.'

That was all the comfort I got. A very general invitation from a man who, by his own showing, was as hard to find as a swallow, a snipe, or a woodcock. What was the good of his house in London to me? Did I ever go to.

London? I was as likely to go with the snipes and woodcocks in the spring to those Northern regions, the edge of Lapland, or the wilds of Nova Zembla and Spitzbergen where, as naturalists tell us, the mass of that dainty class of birds are in the habit of laying their eggs. And see what he said, when my Aunt Mandeville departed from her invariable rule and went out of her way to ask him to Mandeville Hall. He might come if he came to Leamington to hunt. Suppose he did not come to hunt. Suppose he fell into a ditch out shooting, and sprained his ankle as I had done, and couldn't come to Leamington to hunt. What was the good of a special invitation to such a selfish old man of the world as Arethusa's father?

I was so out of patience with him that I did not even beg him to remember me to Miss Chichester. So we climbed the steamer's side, and left Colonel Chichester waving his handkerchief in the air, and bobbing up and down on the waves. 'A hard-hearted old wretch,' I remember calling him to myself. 'Quite fit to run in double harness with Arethusa's Aunt Buller—O Aunt Buller! O Arethusa! O ye 10th! ye wasp-waisted regiment of dandies! woe betide you, if you, or any of you, take my Arethusa from me!

And here observe the unreasonable impetuosity of youth. 'My Arethusa!' I did not scruple to call 'mine' a young lady who, perhaps, looked on me as a boy, though she was two years younger than myself, and who, so far from returning my affection, had evaded home questions and suggestions, and then ran off and left me to myself.

No! I would have no 'boiled mutton,' charm the captain and steward ever so wisely. Let them eat it all. I wasn't at all hungry. I would have one of Aunt Mandeville's sandwiches. No suffering father of an interesting daughter would, on this return voyage, have had,—I will not say a glass of brandy-and-water, but a cup of cold water from my hand. Had I not brandy-and-watered a father *in extremis* going down, and probably saved his life? All for what? To hear him say, after an intimacy of more than three months, that he hoped he should 'see his young friend somewhere.'

Was not such behaviour enough to freeze the genial flow of charity in my soul, to say nothing of the fact that, though there were some sea-sick parents, there were none that had daughters like Arethusa? But I declare, had Venus herself been on board, or had she risen from the sea-spray in all her beauty, and hailed the *Diana*,

and come on board, I would have been faithful to my Arethusa, with whom, ye young men and maidens, I will confess that I was now desperately in love.

We reached Bristol safely, and went to another hotel, where the inhabitants treated us just as we had been treated before. I didn't know whether our sins were as scarlet next morning, but I know our faces were. The travelling-carriages were unhoused and post-horsed. We rumbled off in our old family procession. Jogged and jolted out of sorts and temper, we got safe, in three days, back to Mandeville Hall, and, no doubt, all enjoyed what, in a small way, is the greatest blessing in life, the comfort of sleeping in one's own bed.

I limped about for a few days in a very disconsolate way. I was too lame to go out shooting, and if I had not been lame I should not have cared to shoot.

'Never knew such a thing as this afore, Mr. Brooks,' said the head-keeper. 'Here's Master Edward says he doesn't care how many coveys there are, and I been a-nursing them better nor my own infants all summer.'

'Something a come over him besides that sprain,' replied Brooks. 'My opinion it's all along of that sour cider, which it is enough to cut you

in two, if you're forced to drink it, which we poor servants was obliged to do in that vinegar cruet, Ilfracombe. Talk of rocks and scenery, it's all very well if you have the comfort of your meals "regular;" but scenery, without your meals at proper times, 'specially when it's washed down with sour cider, lies very heavy on the pit of the stomach. Master Edward did drink some of it, contrary to my advice, and that's what's having an effect on him now. He's pining away like. But once he gets his meals regular he'll be all right.'

That was the diagnosis of Brooks on my case.

As for me, I felt that, if I could only have one little line from Arethusa telling me that she was not indifferent to me, I should be quite cured, and would shoot again against the best of them.

My Aunt put it all down to the sprain and to reading. I really believe she thought I could have taken my degree without once opening a book, though no one would have been more disappointed than she had I been plucked.

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW I TOOK MY DEGREE.

I WENT up to Oxford, where I had been a 'man' any time these three years. I was nearly twenty-one—twenty-one that Christmas, and so I was to all intents and purposes a man. I went up to Oxford, I say, and all my friends in 'the house' at once said, 'Halfacre has been reading too hard for his "greats." He looks very seedy.'

How little they knew of the human heart, and its power to turn any one into paste, to knead up the flour of our existence into dough, and then leave it. Here I was, an unleavened cake that wouldn't rise, because Arethusa had left me without saying good-bye. My friends in 'the House' did all they could for me,—that is, they did everything to hinder me in taking my degree. They took me down the river in skiffs; they made me go and see pigeon-matches shot at the weirs; they gave me breakfast-parties and supper-parties. It was all no good. Nothing could dispel my mel-

ancholy. It was the Sorrows of Werther over again, and a repetition of his Charlotte and her bread and butter.

Day by day went on, and at last the fatal day for going into the schools came. The clerk of the schools—I remember his name was Purdue; what an *enfant perdu* I felt!—came to summon me before the examiners. One or two had been frightened by their severity to take their names off the list, and so my name came on a day before its time.

‘Sorry to say, sir,’ said the ever bland Purdue, who had acted as Jack Ketch to so many undergraduates, ‘sorry to say, sir, that the examiners would be glad of your presence in the schools to-day. To be sure they have plucked a good many gentlemen this time; what they call “raising the standard.” Of course you are safe to pass.’

Then I put on my white tie and bands, and in full academics presented myself before the examiners.

I have already told you that I was well up in divinity. I was not like the man who declined to say anything about Saul, because that was ‘a way the examiners had of getting into Kings.’ I need not say he was plucked; but he had reasons for stopping the entry into Kings at once, for of all the boggy places in a divinity examination com-

mend me to Kings. Suppose an examiner chose to examine you about the battles in Gob, and as to Ishbibenob and his fingers and toes; suppose he was curious about Athaliah, and you thought Athaliah was a man; suppose he plucked you because you could not tell him anything about Mahalal Shashbash? All this, and far worse, he might ask you out of Kings. Then he might tease you on the differences between Kings and Chronicles. For instance, he might ask you why the 'almug' trees of one are the 'algun' trees of the other. It was no answer to say that it didn't matter, that it was all the same; such an answer to a don on the other side of the table was 'impudence,' and punished accordingly. Then there was Jehu, that very Christian character; of him you were expected to know more than — of Balliol knew in my time. All he knew of Jehu was that he was 'a furious driver,' and that was not such a bad answer, because the only thing that — of Balliol could do was to drive a tandem.

But, as I have said, for me divinity had no terrors. I remember they put me on in the Gospel of St. John and the visit of Nicodemus. When I came to the part, 'the wind bloweth where it listeth,' I thought, 'Oh, for a wind that would waft me to Arethusa!' but I boggled through the

passage, and was complimented by the examiner for my divinity. Then they put me on in Virgil, and in that passage of the Georgics—

‘Juvat ire jugis,’ *etcetera*.

The passage I mean about the Castalian spring. After I had construed it, the examiner asked me if I remembered the names of any other famous springs. There were many, I said,—the fountain of Bandusia, mentioned by Horace, Aganippe, and the fountain of Arethusa. ‘What did I know of the fountain of Arethusa?—who was Arethusa?’ Now you don’t suppose, though those were only the days of Lemprière, that I had not read up every notice of Arethusa in that famous dictionary. At the present time, with the help of Smith’s famous dictionaries, I should have done better; but what I wish to point out is, that I did then as well as I could. I told the examiners everything about Arethusa; and after I had exhausted Lemprière, and quoted passage after passage in which she is named out of the classics, I gave them Shelley’s poem at full length.

The examiners were in ecstasy. I fancy they had never examined a man in love before, who had happened in the examination to be able to bring in the object of his affections. So far from being plucked, the examiners thanked me when

my examination was over, and formally asked me to go in for honours. A man who had shown such an acquaintance with the history and adventures of a rather obscure nymph must have great knowledge of the classics as a whole. This polite invitation I was wise enough to decline, remembering the 'alas! alas!' and 'ah me! ah me!' of my tutor. But there I was, with my certificate of passing, my *testamur* in my hand, and this, too, was all owing to Arethusa.

I went down in triumph, and my Aunt was delighted at my success and the compliment paid me by the examiners; but I did not tell her that it was all owing to Arethusa. She would have laughed at me if I had mentioned the matter. As for me, I only longed to meet Arethusa once more, for I felt myself twice as much a man as I had been before. Had I not now a bachelor's gown on my back?

All that winter I spent at home at Mandeville Hall. I had now left Oxford, and was no more an undergraduate and a boy. I am afraid I gave myself great airs. I would not allow Brooks to say 'Master Edward.' 'No, no, Brooks! I am now Mister Edward, if you please.'

'But it sounds more familiar like. Many a time and oft have I been out birdsnesting with you, and how many times have I been longstop to you

at cricket, Master Edward—I beg your pardon—Mister Edward?’

‘Familiar or not, I am no longer Master but Mister Edward, Brooks.’ For I thought how dreadful it would be if Arethusa came to the Hall and heard the servants still calling me ‘Master Edward,’ like a child.

But Arethusa never came. All that winter I waited, and she never came. The worst was that no one knew their address. A letter written by my Aunt just before Christmas never reached Colonel Chichester,—at least, that most polite of men did not answer it—a piece of rudeness he would never commit. Where were they? Still at Aunt Buller’s? Still dancing with the 10th? The 10th were as odious to me as the ever-victorious Tenth Roman Legion, so long quartered in Britain, were to the naked Picts, on whose bodies their javelins and short swords made much havoc.

What did I do all that winter? I hunted and shot, and shot and hunted; I never went away from home lest some day cards should be left, ‘Colonel Chichester, Miss Chichester, 6, Curry Crescent, Leamington.’ On Sundays I would have taught like my Aunt Mandeville in the school, only, in spite of my degree, I dreaded the bogginess of Scripture, and thought how easy it might be for such a Sunday school teacher as I

should be to be 'overthrown in stony places.' But though I refrained from such a rash step, I was held up as a model young man; 'so quiet,' 'so domestic,' 'making himself everything to dear Mrs. Mandeville.' They little knew that the reason why I never left Mandeville Hall for a day was fear lest I should miss Arethusa.

But Arethusa never came. Spring came, and no Arethusa; I grew restless, and could not sleep.

'I did think,' said Mr. Brooks, 'as how it was along of his meals. Loss of meals can't never be made up in this life, whatever they may be in the next, which it isn't at all likely. But seeing he's now had his meals regular at Oxford and here for a better nor three months, I can't make out what it is.'

My Aunt still thought it was all that reading. 'Those examiners,' she said, 'do set such hard questions to young men; I wonder how their brains ever stand it. I am sure I wish there were no examinations.'

Dear Aunt Mandeville, what would she have said had she lived in these days of competitive examinations, when the time is coming when every man under fifty will be examined every day before he goes out, to see if he is fit for his place? In those days I can safely say that our brains were

not overworked with reading. To amuse me, my Aunt was unusually hospitable. My coming-of age at Christmas was celebrated in true old English style. The Hall was full of guests—which it had not been for many a day. All the spare rooms were occupied, and we even put a married couple into Queen Elizabeth's room, where no one had slept since Blogg of bristle and tallow judgment had seen 'the White Lady.'

The reason why we did this was plain; we had no wish to have another scene, and it is well known that no ghost ever appears—no ghost of decent character, I mean—to a man and his wife. Even ghosts have manners, and no ghost would ever show himself, would ever walk suddenly into the presence of two persons, especially of different sexes. We had no apparition, therefore, and every one but myself had a very merry time of it. I alone, though I seemed to be very happy, was as dull as ditchwater, and went through all the festivities in a mechanical manner. Some persons thought it pride; some, bad manners; some, weak digestion: others, Puseyism just beginning to show the tip of its nose; but no one put it down to its true cause—want of Arethusa.

I grew so pale and wan that old Mindererus put on his glasses and said, after a long look at me:

‘Bless the boy, I can’t tell what’s the matter with him; he looks so woebegone.’

So things went on till Easter, which fell early that year; and then, when Lent was over, my Aunt Mandeville had more than one serious conversation all alone with the doctor. What they talked of nobody knew; but I had no doubt it related to me, for after his last and longest visit, my Aunt said very gently after dinner, ‘I am thinking of going to town, Edward.’

‘Oh, indeed, Aunt; how soon will you be back?’

‘I do not mean for a short visit; I mean for the season. It is a long time since I have been in town, and I feel as though I should like to see it again.’

To any one who really knew my Aunt Mandeville, this was a most astounding proposal. Never was a woman less town and more country-made. She hated London, and loved the country, and yet she quietly said she was going to town for the season. I should have been less surprised if she had announced her intention of becoming a Bible-woman in Madagascar, or of visiting my parents, who were so deeply mortgaged to the West Indies. I even tried to remonstrate with her, but it was no good. She must and would go. Quite apart from herself, she was sure it would do

me good. I had not looked well for months, and a little gaiety in town would be good for me; besides, I ought to make new friends. Why was I to be shut up with her all my life? it was moping work living with an old woman. In short, whatever I said, she had some good answer.

The result was that at the end of Easter week, Brooks, groaning both in body and spirit, was sent off to London to look for a house, and in two days he wrote word to my Aunt that he had taken her what he called 'a mansion' in Brook Street.

'A very nice street it used to be when I was young,' said my Aunt. 'Close to the Park, and very airy.'

'When will you go, Aunt?'

'As soon as we can get ready,—the end of this week. We have lost some of the season already.'

That was Tuesday, and on Thursday we set off to post up from Mandeville Hall, and on Saturday evening we reached Brook Street, just in time to have some tea and go to bed.

All this time I was like a machine. It never occurred to me that I might meet Arethusa in town. She had almost become as mythic as her classical namesake. Who could find her? She might be running underground in any part of England, disappearing wilfully, and reappearing as capriciously in some other part. Were she in

town, ten to one she would be gone next day. No, it was not worth taking the trouble to look for such an Arethusa of the wisp. She might show herself if she pleased—I would take no pains to find her. And yet while all this was passing through my head, I would willingly have given ten years of my life to have seen her for one instant.

Next morning we got up, had breakfast, and went to Boanerges Chapel, not a stone's throw off. The very first person I saw, not five pews off, was Arethusa, demurely seated by her father's side.

Do you think it would have been idolatry had I there and then gone over to the Mandeville faith, and fallen down and worshipped my Aunt on the spot, for bringing me to town against my will?

CHAPTER XXV.

HOW I WENT TO EVENING CHURCH, AND GOT UP NEXT
MORNING WITH THE SWEEPS.

As soon as the sermon was over,—how I wished there had been none at all!—and as we were going out of the chapel, I whispered to my Aunt :

‘ There are the Chichesters.’

‘ Where, Edward?’

‘ Just before us.’

The Colonel was never long in getting out of church, and besides, on this occasion, he had five pews start of us. I don’t know whether Arethus’s eyes had been as sharp as mine ; perhaps not, for we were behind, and she was not like a fly with eyes in her head. Her father had certainly not seen us. As we passed them,—to do which I had to hurry my Aunt a little,—I turned, and then the Colonel saw me.

‘ Glad to see you in London, Mrs. Mandeville ; This is an unexpected pleasure.’

My Aunt particularly disliked greetings in church. ‘ Churches were made for prayers and

sermons,' she said; 'not for bowing and hand-shaking.' She, therefore, answered the Colonel's salutation with a very slight and very dignified bow, and we passed on. She was not very fond of talking to people on Sundays even out of church; but at the door the Chichesters overtook us in their turn, and then Auntie was fairly at bay, and had to open her mouth.

'I am glad to see you, Colonel Chichester, and Miss Chichester too.'

Meantime I held out my hand to Arethusa, and Arethusa shook it.

'Who would have thought of seeing you in town?' said the Colonel; 'where are you staying?'

'In Brook Street, No. —,' said my Aunt; 'and where are you?'

'Our house is not far off,' said the Colonel, 'No. — South Street.'

'Now that we know where we live,' said my Aunt, 'I hope we shall see something of one another;' and then having, as she thought, quite broken her Sunday rule of never speaking to any one going to or returning from church, she bade the Chichesters good-bye, and we went home.

What had Arethusa said? Only one little sentence, but that was enough to make me very happy; it was this:

'I am so glad to see you.' 'You,' without

touching on that odious 'Mr. Halfacre,' which would have come dragging along at the end of such a sweet sentence like a coach and six, or the German Passive; two of the most cumbersome inventions that the mind of man has ever conceived.

I went home, therefore, in better spirits than I had been for months; but as a morbid mind must have something to fret about, I must say I did not quite like my Aunt's Sunday stiffness to the Chichesters; and as for her expressed wish to see something of them, it looked as though she had stolen a leaf out of Colonel Chichester's book, and betaken herself to indefinite invitations.

However, I was much happier; ate my luncheon 'regular' in a way to please even Brooks, and altogether was in such good humour that I went to evening service with my Aunt, thereby losing my dinner. You must recollect, all ye miserable sinners who are wicked enough to require to go to church twice and thrice a-Sunday, and yet can manage to get back just in time for a dinner of three courses at a quarter past eight, that in those days we dined at seven, or at latest half past, and therefore evening service was attended with the consequence I have mentioned.

And here let me ask you,—Do you not hate an early dinner in London on Sunday? Is it not

notorious that going to church makes one more hungry than a ten-mile walk? and what I ask, if you have an early dinner, and go to evening service, is one to do with one's appetite about eight o'clock. You have 'tea,' you say. 'Tea!' I say, with a note of admiration. 'Tea with bread and butter,' you answer again. I again repeat, 'Tea with bread and butter!' with another note of admiration. You get angry at my greediness, and say, 'Well! tea with bread and butter, and cold beef, and chicken, and ham and eggs, and a lobster and salad, and fried plum-pudding: will that satisfy you?' To all which I answer, 'Yes;' if you are as good as your word, and keep faith in having all those things ready for me, I will come next Sunday evening and take 'tea' with you, and I will come all the more readily if you will substitute a bottle of Bordeaux for the teapot, and let us have two dozen oysters before we begin.

You will say, 'Why, that is a regular dinner.' And so I assure you I mean it to be if I go with you first to Boanerges Chapel next Sunday evening, and then home to tea with you. Two or three times in my life I have been near dying of early dinner and tea. Once I went to a house in the country, and missed the early dinner altogether, the train being late, and had nothing but 'the tea' from nine A.M. one day to the same hour next day,

the 'tea' being not at all 'strong' either in itself or its accessories. Oh, the agonies of hunger that I suffered after that tea, lying awake all night and wishing for the morn! resolving never to go to that house without a loaf of bread and a tongue in my portmanteau.

But the atrocities of those early dinners and weak teas have made me forget my story. Yes, I was very good; that Sunday evening I went again to Boanerges Chapel with Auntie. You will say it was all because I thought Arethusa would be there. I knew better; she was not likely to come without her father, and Colonel Chichester was not the man to go without his dinner. He was very well bred and very selfish. He was kind enough when an act of kindness stood before him, staring him in the face; but as to going out of his way to do a good deed, it was a thing he never thought of. He would have called it knight-errantry to have gone out of his usual course for anything.

I believe, though, that I did manage to get Auntie into the very pew in which Arethusa had sat in the morning. It was a far nicer pew to sit in than the one which belonged to our 'mansion.'

After that 'function,' as it would now be called, was over, we went home, and had what my Aunt boldly called 'supper.' Did not Brooks preside over

it? and with all his faults,—which from long-suffering we had got almost to regard as virtues—there was one thing which you were sure to get when Brooks watched over the board, and that was, more than enough. There was no starvation in any of his arrangements. He thought the honour of the family was concerned in the abundance of its food, quite as much as in the morals of its members; and if he had been a great reformer, he would have laid down a code of morality in which what he called ‘skimping’ and ‘flint-skinning’—stint and meanness, in short—would be proscribed as the eighth and greatest deadly sin.

Once when we went into Cheshire,—that most hospitable and cheese-toasting of counties—a county, I should say, in which as a general rule, ‘cheese-paring’ is unknown—it was our misfortune to stay with a miser. You all know the sort of man,—or if you don’t know him, be warned by me, and decline his acquaintance. Though rolling in wealth, he never had anything but bread-and-butter for breakfast. There was a hen, and when it laid an egg, he and his wife drew lots for it for breakfast. It was a little better when we were there,—he had dried haddocks. You don’t like dried haddocks. They are dry enough when they first come out of the sea, and they don’t get any softer or better tasted by drying.

Well! there we agree. I don't like them either; but we had them every morning with this miser; the worst thing of all being that he thought all the time that he was going to great expense for our sakes. He was the man who, having ordered one rabbit for dinner, when his agent was coming for the day, countermanded it when he heard that the agent, like a wise man, would not stay to dinner. And this on an estate where the rabbits bred by thousands, as the tenants said, when they walked through their fields just before harvest with tears in their eyes.

Brooks was grand on that occasion. He shook the dust off his feet as he left 'Hungry Hall,' as he called it.

'A nasty, beggarly lot! All the coachmen as come here during our visit never had one drop of beer, or a crust and a bit of cheese. Twenty miles here, some on 'em; and twenty back. As for meals "regular," the bell rang every day like clockwork; but when we was all gathered in the servants' hall, there was nothing but cold boiled beef, and a scrap or two of cold mutton. Small beer, worser nor that Devonshire cider; and cheese so poor, a mouse wouldn't have ran away with it,—no! not if she had been starving. I tell you, Master Edward, we drinks more beer at Mandeville Hall in one week—aye, and ten times as

strong, every drop on it——as they do at “ Hungry Hall ” in the whole year.’

But, I am bound to say that in every other house at which we stayed, in a lengthened Cheshire progress, the food, and drink, and entertainment generally, were such as to call down the enthusiastic praise of such a fastidious critic of creature comforts as Mr. Brooks.

This chapter is all on eating and drinking. See the bad effects of supper on Sunday on the juvenile mind. It has quite diverted me from my story.

Next day I was up with the sweeps. In the country it would have been with the lark; but the sweeps, so far as I know, are the only early birds in London, and I do not know whether any one will agree with me in thinking John Milton would have written

‘ Sweet is the breath of morn, his rising sweet
With charm of earliest sweeps,’

had he lived in this century. But is there not a charm about ‘earliest sweeps;’ especially when they mistake their orders and knock up the wrong house? Yes! to me there was on that April morning. That was before the days of *Ramoneurs* and sweeping-machines. The climbing boys were still climbing, and still boys.

Children of tender years were still forced to climb chimneys. It was, in fact, just before their emancipation. Those grimy, stunted fellows, whom old ladies now pity and relieve, are not boys, but grown men, invaluable to master sweeps for their undersize, but free to go up a 'chimbley' or not as they choose. There is no law in England to prevent a man of forty from going up a chimney if he chooses. And these men choose it. It is their profession. Praise them, therefore, but you need not pity them. If there is anything they detest it is a Ramoneur company which has taken the soot out of their bags.

But I say it was sweet to me on that April morning, in the twilight, to hear a most melodious sweep calling out, 'Sweep,' 'sweeeep,' 'sweeeep;' to see the little fellow first ring up our cook, and then the cook opposite, who, by the sloth with which she or the kitchenmaid appeared, did not seem to think the sweep-song so beautiful. Brooks, too, I daresay, as he turned on his lowly couch and heard the ringing, and the constant cry of 'Sweep,' 'sweeeep,' 'sweeeep,' exclaimed, 'Drat them sweeps! od rabbit them!' By which, perhaps, he meant to say that he wished anything he detested were providentially turned into a Welsh rabbit. I do not spell it 'rarebit,' but phonetically—a dainty which he particularly affected.

In due time my little songster, my blackbird, my sweep, appeared at the top of a chimney-pot. It was a very tall red one, I remember. How he got up so high, and out of such a narrow tube, was wonderful. He was but a little fellow, not ten years old, I should say, and there, with brush and shovel out of the top, he repeated his song several times; singing as the wild birds sing at dawn in May, to themselves alone, and merely for the sake of the sweet melody. But not for himself alone, for me who was dressing myself in a wild kind of way, as though Arethusa were waiting for me in Grosvenor Square—and for two great master-sweeps who were looking up at him from the street to see that he sang prettily and did his dirty work well. Then he came down, it seemed to me in no time, in less time than it took me to brush my curly hair, and went off with the master-sweeps, one of whom gave him a curse and the other a kick for keeping them so long waiting. Poor little fellow! I wonder where he is now. Has he, too, lived through all his soot and grime and got to be a master-sweep? And does he keep a man as old, but far smaller than himself, to go up ‘them crooked chimbleys as no machine vill sweep?’—a grown man whom he cannot kick,—and does he ease his feelings by cursing the *Ramoneur*?

All this chimney-sweeping and dressing took

less time to do than to tell about. I was up long before all the servants. What was I to do? It was not six o'clock. If I stayed indoors, the housemaids would be astir about seven, flitting about the house as restless as bats, and about as useful, sweeping dust from one stair to another, and finally into a cupboard. Opening the shutters,—that, I own, is useful; but tidying the room; what a wrong use of words is that. What housemaid has eye enough to set a chair, a sofa, or a table straight; or if they have them, they far prefer setting them straight at those companies of the Guards, who passed our house in the early morning, their band playing, and all the maids as surely running to the windows to see 'the pretty soldiers.' Then the dust that they raise, where does it go to? Out of the windows it is to be hoped, if the windows are open; but if they are not, on to the sofas, behind the chairs, under the cabinets, and up on their tops. You can lay a ghost, I have heard, once for all,—at least, bell, book, and candle used to do so,—but the ghost of the dust in a London house is only laid every day to rise again the next morning.

The same thing goes on in every room; but the worst of all rooms for a servant to tidy is a library. How often have all 'master's nasty books all lying open so untidy on the table,' been tidied

and shut up and restored to their places on the shelves by the zealous housemaid. The unhappy master who with great care and trouble has laid those books open overnight, and flatters himself that next day, having at last got all his references to the learned authors ready, he will really set to work on his *opus magnum*, the treatise which shall render him famous for ever ; it may be on The Sneezes of the Patriarchs, '*De Patriarcharum Sternutandi Ratione*,' or 'On the use of Handkerchiefs among the Rich,' or 'On the name of the mother of Moses, as derived from the evidence of Hieroglyphics,'—this unhappy master, I say, comes down to breakfast, and having discussed that repast in charity with all men and housemaids, retires to work in his library, only to find that all his week's labour has been thrown away.

Beware of over zeal, ye housemaids, ye generation of 'wipers,' as Brooks would call them ; or at least flee from the wrath of the master whom ye have so wilfully provoked.

As soon as I got down, then, I put on my hat and went out. I went to South Street, and looked up at what I felt quite sure was Arethusa's window. I might as well have tried to look through a brick wall. It was a small but comfortable-looking house, of old red brick ; but, of course, every blind in the house was close drawn, and where there weren't

blinds the shutters were shut. No. — South Street was still deep in death's brother, sleep. But, sleeping or waking, there was the casket which contained the jewel — there the shrine in which reposed the body of my saint. I felt like the pilgrim who approached the shrine of his patron, his Becket, on a day when it was not open; he had to content himself with knowing that inside that mock house of shining silver gilt and blazing with gems, reposed the object of his adoration; and so I felt. Except that he worshipped merely a few dry bones, to which his fancy gave life and power, while my shrine contained a living body, instead of a skeleton; eyes as bright as any diamond, instead of empty sockets; pearly teeth half-seen through parting lips, instead of one or two yellow stumps on grinning jawbones; a slender waist, instead of mere ribs and backbone:—in short, one glowing rounded whole, instead of a dry framework of bones. Yes! I am not at all sure, as we are all sinners, that I do not much prefer a live sinner of eighteen to the most venerable defunct saint of eighty! But I am quite sure that on that April morning, all the sinners and saints that ever did wrong or good would have been found wanting if weighed in the scales of my eyes against my Arethusa.

I walked up and down the street once or twice. I went down South Street the other day, and

looked at No. —. It looked as red as ever; like an old beauty, its complexion had been restored by rouge. There was the shrine, but where was the saint? Fled, gone, passed away from me for ever. The street, up and down which it once seemed happiness to pace, seemed gloomy and confined. There was no air in it. It is fashionable enough still, as the old beauties, to whom I have compared No. —, are still fashionable; but to me it has lost its charms, as they have. I walked away into Hyde Park to try to breathe.

On that morning, too, I had to fly to Hyde Park. I had no excuse for walking up and down the street. A policeman—they had then not very long displaced the ‘old Charlies,’ and were as clean-sweeping as new brooms—came along the street. I don’t believe he even looked at me, but I felt sure that he knew I had come there to look at Arethusa’s house, and I felt thankful that he did not take me up. Then, up from the steps of an area, crawled a hideous, slatternly thing, which called itself a woman—a thing with frizzy hair all down her neck, with dirty dress, unlaced boots, and a mop and pail. It was a kitchenmaid, about to clean the steps. Then another came a little lower down; last of all, came a milkman with his cry. It did not sound half so melodious as that of the little sweep. I now thought it was time

to beat a retreat. It was a warm morning for April, so I thought I would go down to the Serpentine, and see the people bathe. There were not so many bathers, and those not so rough as some are now, and I felt tempted to bathe too, had I not been alone. I would have bathed had not the horrid thought seized me, 'If I bathe and somebody runs off with my clothes, what shall I do? If he is a beggar and leaves me his clothes, shall I put them on, and so present myself before my Aunt at breakfast? or shall I disdain them and climb up into a tree, and there remain, like Adam, in a state of innocence, but in sore fear of the police, till I am discovered at mid-day and dragged off to Marlborough Street as a fiend in human shape?'

On second thoughts, therefore, I determined not to bathe, but to watch the bathers. They were well behaved and amusing; but even a lover gets hungry on an April morning. I began to feel I wanted my breakfast, and retraced my steps to Brook Street. I took care to pass through South Street again, and then all the shutters were open, the blinds in some of the bed-rooms drawn up, and so I went home wondering whether Arethusa's room was one of those with its blinds drawn up, or with them still down. Dear me! to think of the idleness of love, and how it makes a man waste his

time on the most trivial things, as though they were matters of momentous importance. They tell you the style is the man; and so I think it is, for we know that love changes a man, and if it does that it can also change his style, and make him write platitudes for sense and use all sorts of long words, first cousins to 'platitude,' instead of short ones.

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